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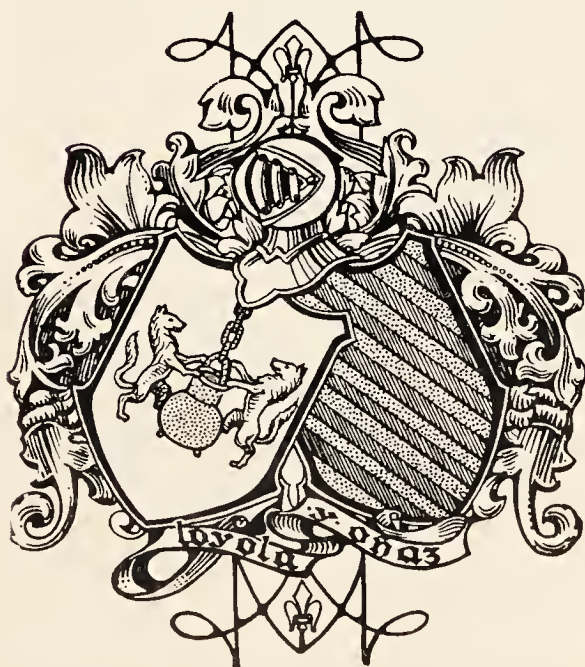
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ASPECTS OF BRITISH COLONIAL
POLICY BETWEEN THE WARS

*The Reid Lectures delivered at Acadia University
in February 1963*

by

KENNETH ROBINSON

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University of London*

with a Preface by

WATSON KIRKCONNELL

President of Acadia University

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

This book contains the Reid Lectures delivered at Acadia University in February 1963. I am most grateful to the President and his colleagues for honouring me with the invitation to give them and for their gracious hospitality during my stay in Nova Scotia. I have restored to the second chapter some administrative detail which would have overloaded a lecture and made minor revisions elsewhere but the lectures are substantially as delivered.

In the first lecture I have made use of one or two passages from a chapter on the Commonwealth of Nations 1917-1949 which I contributed to *L'Europe au XIXe et XXe Siècles*, Volume 6. I am obliged to the publishers, Messrs Marzorati of Milan, for permitting this. I am also grateful to Professor G. S. Graham, Dr A. F. Madden, and Professor P. N. S. Mansergh for their kindness in reading and commenting on the manuscript, and to Miss Margaret Beard for reading the proofs.

K. E. R.

Institute of Commonwealth Studies
London, February 1964

PREFACE

The Reid Lectures were established in 1958 by Harvey T. Reid, B.A. (Acadia and Oxon), D.C.L. (Acadia), of St Paul, Minnesota. Their purpose is to bring to Acadia University, at least every second year, an eminent scholar or man of affairs who will give a brief series of lectures on some important phase of history or political science. Their founder expressed a basic preference for a theme related to the British Commonwealth of Nations, but did not rigidly so restrict the lecturer.

Dr Reid was born in Hartland, New Brunswick, in 1891 and entered Acadia in 1908. On graduating in 1912, he was chosen as Rhodes Scholar for Nova Scotia and took an Oxford degree two years later. In the first world war he served as a captain in the Royal Field Artillery and was wounded in action. In due time he became a member of the Minnesota State Bar Association and the American Bar Association. He has been president of the West Law Publishing Company since 1948 and of the American Law Book Publishing Company since 1952.

An invitation to deliver the first Reid Lectures was given early in 1958 to His Excellency Norman A. Robertson, Canadian Ambassador to the U.S.A. and formerly High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. His lectures were entitled 'Some Thoughts on the Commonwealth'. Charles Edmund Carrington, Professor of British Commonwealth Relations in the Royal Institute of International Affairs, delivered the second series of lectures in October 1959, on 'The Liquidation of the British Empire'. Nicholas Mansergh, the Smuts Professor of the History of the British Commonwealth in the University of Cambridge, delivered the third series of

lectures, in December 1960, on 'South Africa 1906-1960: The Price of Magnanimity'. Kenneth Robinson, Director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in the University of London, delivered the fourth series of lectures at Acadia University in February 1963 on 'British Colonial Policy between the Wars' and, with minor revisions, these are printed here.

WATSON KIRKCONNELL

Acadia University

February 1964

I

THE IMPERIAL CONTEXT OF 'TRUSTEESHIP'

At the end of the first world war, the British Empire reached its greatest territorial extent. Although still generally, and even officially, so called, the Empire included the five self-governing communities known as Dominions, whose actual relationship with Great Britain, if somewhat obscure, was evidently very different from what the word 'empire' implied elsewhere. For at least a quarter of a century people had been arguing that this new relationship called for a new name.¹ This was soon to result in the official use, to describe their association with Britain, of a new expression, the 'British Commonwealth of Nations'.² In the widest sense in which either name could be used, the political entity so described included more than a quarter of the world's surface and more than a quarter of its population. Moreover, in the peace settlement, the British Empire, as cynics did not fail to notice, acquired control of the greater part of the German colonies and of much of the Turkish Empire, though these additions, made under the new Mandate system of the League of Nations, were held to imply something short of annexation and, in the former Turkish territories at any rate, called for the early realization of self-government.

Hardly more than a quarter of a century later, in 1949, this British Empire had given place to a group of eight independent states, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, and Ceylon, which, in that year, declared themselves to be 'united as free and equal members of

the Commonwealth of Nations'—the adjective 'British' now disappeared—'freely co-operating in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress'. Outside this unique association, various parts of the world, which in 1919 were under the effective ultimate control of the British government in London—Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Burma, and Ireland—had become independent sovereign states. Of what was left besides these two groups of independent states, many territories were in the process of achieving internal self-government and were recognized as destined to emerge, sooner rather than later, as independent states, either within or outside the Commonwealth. Southern Rhodesia, or rather its tiny white population, had indeed enjoyed internal self-government since 1923 subject only to ineffective British control of certain aspects of the treatment of 'native affairs'.³ The Gold Coast and Nigeria were discussing new Constitutions which would give them elected African assemblies enjoying a very large amount of control of their internal affairs, while the ancient colonies in the West Indies seemed at last to be accepting the idea of federation as the pre-requisite of full independence within the Commonwealth. Internal self-government had just been restored in Malta. Even if all such territories, which were nearly self-governing but not quite, were included in the term, the British Empire, in the sense of territories under the ultimate political control of Great Britain, now included only some seventy-five million people, no more than half as much again as the United Kingdom itself.

There are some large questions that will be asked about this great process of decolonization. Was it, after all, no more than the reflection of the declining power of Great Britain in the world, a decline whose consequences in the Imperial sphere it has been the principal merit of that much-vaunted British realism to admit before it was, in the fullest sense, forcibly compelled to do so? Or was it only the concession of the forms of political independence, the better to maintain, as long and

as much as possible, the commercial advantages of that economic dependence which was the frequent accompaniment if not indeed, as Marxists contend, the major purpose of political subordination? Or was it, again, if properly understood, the inevitable working out of what has frequently been asserted to be the central purpose of British rule, 'the government of men by themselves', a preoccupation so deep-seated as to amount to something like a habit, persistent if often fitful? It must be doubtful whether processes so numerous, carried out through so varied a network of relationships, and over such widely differing parts of the world, are ever likely to lend themselves to such summary assessment. But in any event it is certain that our present knowledge of the actual consequences of many decisions, no less than of the motives which led to them, falls far short of what would be needed to arrive at conclusions on matters such as these, even in particular instances, much less in their totality. Whatever its motives, this earlier phase of the transformation of the British Empire preceded the end of colonialism elsewhere. In this, as in much else, the British have been pioneers, even if it was in spite of themselves.

Six major themes can be distinguished in this earlier phase of the transformation of Empire. Three of them were formally announced as early as 1917 when the Imperial War Conference resolved that 'the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire' should be considered after the war but that any such readjustment 'should be based on a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same, should recognize the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations, and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several

Governments may determine'.⁴ The emphasis on Dominion autonomy as involving 'an adequate voice in foreign policy' reasserted Dominion interest in extending their own control in this field and indicated one dominant preoccupation of the next twenty years. The recognition of the position of India, reversing the decision of 1907 excluding India from the Imperial Conference, paralleled the British government's declaration in August 1917⁵ that the object of British policy was 'the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire'. The decision to include India in the new machinery gravely underestimated the period which would elapse before it achieved the fully self-governing status which alone could fully justify that decision, and for the next thirty years the implications of the 'most momentous utterance ever made in India's chequered history'⁶ remained the most crucial of British imperial themes. The use of the new expression 'Commonwealth' coupled with the old adjective Imperial presaged not only the transformation of the relations between the Dominions and Great Britain which 'full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations' would necessitate, but also the ambiguity of expression by which this new multiplicity of states would, for some time yet, seek to retain an 'Imperial' unity.

The fourth theme is one which even today finds all too little place in much British thought and writing about Empire. It is the sorry story of Ireland's struggle for independence: the British Algeria. Like the three earlier themes, its roots reach far back beyond the first world war, but its last phase began with two events of that period which finally destroyed the old Home Rule party: the Unionists' proclaimed intransigence in 1914 and the Easter Rising of 1916. If the first went far to make the Partition of Ireland certain, the implacable suppression of the futile gesture of 1916—Arthur Griffith, the Sinn Fein President, wrote of the British execution of fifteen of its

leaders 'I had not believed they would be stupid enough to do it'⁷—finally won Sinn Féin to the Republic. Together, they doomed the characteristic but too facile hope that the imposition of Dominion status in 1921 might somehow reconcile Irish nationalism and Imperial unity, for they ensured that the freedom it conferred would be doggedly used by the Irish to achieve that true republican freedom they had been denied. In the process, Dominion status was itself dismantled.

But if the lessons alike of Partition and of the limited appeal of Dominion status in countries which were not 'daughter nations' for long went unremarked in British policy elsewhere—as for example in Palestine and India—one lesson of Irish experience remained. 'Ireland was', Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien has written, 'the first instance in modern times where a nation long-subdued won its freedom from a Great Power which had not been defeated in war.' As he goes on to point out, 'the framework within which Irish nationalism was contained, the framework of Anglo-Irish relations, was and is like nothing else in the world' since those relations are 'so ancient and so close—not merely in a geographical sense—that they have created both bitternesses and tolerances of unusual refinement'.⁸ But the experience of 1920 and 1921 left one conviction widespread if often unspoken; there were evidently limits to the extent to which British opinion might be counted on to tolerate the use of British force to suppress nationalism. As Amery, no shamefaced imperialist, wrote of Malta 'we have enough with one Ireland, without creating another'.⁹

In the development of the fifth theme, the rise and decline of British power in the Middle East,¹⁰ the first world war assuredly marked a decisive stage. The declaration of a British Protectorate in Egypt may juridically have done no more than substitute for a nominal Turkish suzerainty an anomalous British one. But it was accompanied by the deposition of the pro-Turkish Khedive and the installation of a Sultan more

acceptable to the British. The facts of British occupation since 1882 could hardly have been more strongly underlined and the stresses of a war in which Britain assumed full responsibility for the defence of a neutral Egypt resulted in a noticeable increase in the evidence of British control and an equally noticed decline in its effective supervision of Egyptian agency in meeting unpopular wartime needs. The result was to be seen in popular support of the demand for independence punctually presented in November 1918 by Zaghlul. All British attempts to satisfy this demand finally broke down, partly because of the ambiguous politics of the Egyptian monarchy but mainly because, while ready to concede the label of independence, the British were determined to retain the substance of power in all they deemed vital to their Imperial needs. What they proposed was in essence only another version of the dyarchy that Congress rejected in India. The defeat of the Turks which ultimately resulted in British control of Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan, under the new Mandate system, set up in a vast area new definitions of British responsibility. But the most decisive single event in the history of British power in the Middle East occurred on 2 November 1917 when the British government issued the Balfour Declaration that they 'viewed with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people', and would 'use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. Though it was to take more than a quarter of a century before the British admitted complete failure in Palestine, that failure was not in Palestine alone. British policy in the Middle East lay in ruins.¹¹

The sixth, and last theme—and the one which we shall be considering in these lectures—the redefinition of policies in the dependent Empire, and especially in Africa, is scarcely to

be found in any general pronouncements of policy before the second world war. This theme has to be traced largely in the interstices of administrative practice and in individual instance. And if it is impossible to point to any convenient signal that a new note had come into the development of this theme with the end of the first world war, the outbreak of the second equally marks no clear end of a phase in its evolution. For that, the decisive event is to be found in the Labour government's public acceptance in 1949 of 'self-government within the British Commonwealth' as the immediate, rather than the remote, object of British policy in the Gold Coast. The implications of that decision elsewhere, but particularly in Africa, the colonial continent *par excellence*, were by no means immediately admitted, if, indeed, they were perceived. But even if the pressure of international hostility to colonialism, then already evident, had not so greatly and so rapidly increased in the ensuing years, those implications would, in my judgement, have been no less profound, though they might not have been so quickly manifest. For the quarter of a century between the end of the first world war and the end of the second, the feature of British colonial policy that stands out in retrospect is the tranquil assumption of the long-term character of colonial rule. It was an assumption accepted by many, perhaps most, of the radical critics of that policy who were often more concerned to purify, supervise, or even internationalize, such rule than to advocate its rapid replacement by independence.

Taken together, these six themes may fairly stand as summarizing that earlier phase in the transformation of the British Empire which came to an end just after the second world war. That phase is now often presented in a perspective very different from that of even a few years ago. The almost exclusive preoccupation of some earlier discussions with its domestic dynamics is judged oddly parochial; for it is presented not as the outcome of any peculiar idiosyncrasy of British

rulers or of the settled communities of the older Commonwealth countries, but rather as the earlier phase of a much larger and more deep-seated change in the whole structure of relations between the western European states and the rest of the world, begun by the first world war and vastly accelerated by the second. From this point of view, the 'failure of nerve' increasingly unconcealed in Britain and France in the 'thirties, which made it impossible to prevent or limit the second world war, is much more important than any ideology of self-government. And even apart from the decline of European power, fundamental changes in the relations of the whole western world with Asia and Africa were an inevitable consequence of the ever-increasing impact of western modernity on their traditional societies, an impact of which European imperialism was the principal, though often involuntary, agent. That the social and economic consequences of the spread of modernity could not for ever have been politically contained by European imperialism—particularly in view of its original maritime basis—need not be disputed. None the less the effective power to make themselves independent actually possessed by many of the new states at the moment of decision in their emancipation can easily be exaggerated—and, not infrequently, has been. In the pressures that have resulted in the headlong retreat from Empire in recent years, some weight must, all the same, be given to this second factor and to an increasingly general realization that its strength could only be expected to grow. More must surely be accorded to the change in the relative power of the European imperial states so drastically brought about by the second world war. It takes time, of course, before the full implications of so vast a change can be realized and their consequences absorbed in day-to-day policy. Yet one may hesitate to accept this plausible thesis as a 'wholly satisfactory explanation even of the more recent phase of decolonization if one recalls post-war French policy in Indochina, the long

struggle to retain Tunisia and Morocco, to say nothing of Algeria (a special case by any standards) or Dutch policy in Indonesia or, more striking still, that of the Portuguese in Angola.

However they may be interpreted, the developments of the *last* decade do little to justify the view that those of the *earlier* phase in the transformation of the British Empire were no more than inevitable concessions from weakness. Whatever importance history may assign to an intelligent anticipation of that inevitability, we need not deny the significance of a pervasive conviction among many in Britain, whose political outlook might otherwise have led them to rally to the assertion of Imperial power, that the representatives of British democracy would not in such contexts persist in a policy of repression long enough for success. 'Unionist policy died' Austen Chamberlain had told the House of Commons in 1922 'not because it was . . . wrong' but because 'to be successful it needed continuity, patience, perseverance—and our people would not pursue it connectedly through the changes of party warfare.'¹² The lesson may not have been without its influence in those interminable debates which finally resulted in Baldwin's supporters putting the Government of India Act on the statute book in 1935, in spite of Winston Churchill—and much else. There was, however, something more, something which was the unique achievement, until then, of the British Empire: the existence of the Dominions.

It may be true, as Professor Thornton asserts in his brilliant, if sometimes perverse, analysis of *The Imperial Idea*, that 'no emotional capital was invested by imperialists in the idea of the Commonwealth'.¹³ It depends on whom you count as imperialists. But no one who has seriously studied the end of other contemporary empires can fail to realize the immense difference that the 'Dominion model' made in the British case, merely by existing at all. For a time, it is true, the steady

development of 'colonial self-government' and the widening realization of its implications on the relationship between Britain and the Dominions served only to underline the gulf that existed between what Milner in 1906 had described as 'The Two Empires', 'the one', to quote an Indian historian, 'white and self-governing, the other non-white and dependent. The former was "Greater Britain", an "expansion of England", "the sphere of settlement", "an empire of dwelling places"; it was not really "empire" in the strict sense of the term but a "commonwealth". The latter belonged to "the sphere of rule", the English were in it but not of it; it was the true "empire" in the classic continental tradition.'¹⁴ But even as this division was becoming more pronounced it was being undermined at its most crucial point. While Imperialists argued what in retrospect seems a phantom debate about the merits of Federation and Tariff Reform as a means of reconciling Dominion freedom with Imperial unity, 'colonial self-government' provided the somewhat prosaic wagon to which Indians hitched their nationalist star. 'The cases of the French in Canada and the Boers in South Africa showed', said the Congress leader, Gokhale, 'that there was room in the Empire for a self-respecting India.'¹⁵ No doubt Indians had largely turned away from 'colonial self-government' as a programme when the British at last brought themselves in 1917 to proclaim it as their aim in India. But for their British rulers, that declaration in the end proved to be the critical turning point. Some, of course, still hoped that it might somehow be possible to undo that fatal step or at least to delay indefinitely further progress on a road they were convinced could only lead—the phrase is Churchill's—to 'measureless disasters'.¹⁶ But others had some glimpse of what had once moved the young Philip Kerr (the later Lord Lothian) who had been one of the select band in Milner's kindergarten to tell a Toronto audience in 1912 'If we manage to create in India a self-governing, responsible dominion, and if India,

when it is responsible and self-governing, elects to remain within the British Empire, we shall have solved the greatest difficulty which presents itself to the world today'.¹⁷ The vision faded in the long years of frustration and resistance but when independent India elected—for in this the two new Indian Dominions, divided in almost everything else, were agreed—to remain within the Commonwealth, the decision did much to promote British acquiescence in the transformation of what remained of that second, Dependent, Empire in almost all of which self-government had until the second world war seemed no more than a comfortably remote contingency.

The rosy glow that attended Asian membership also did something to encourage the British to overlook the full import of those major changes that had meanwhile come about in the nature of the Commonwealth itself. These were the outcome partly of Afrikaner and Irish determination to resolve the skilful ambiguities of the Balfour report, partly of the national growth of the older Dominions, greatly accelerated by the second war, and partly of the military and economic weakness which was the price Britain had to pay for failing to prevent the war she eventually won. In sum, the Commonwealth changed from being a community into which you were, so to speak, born into an association which for the present at least you decided not to leave. By helping for a time to cushion the British from any clear appreciation of the nature and limitations of this new Commonwealth, Asian membership no doubt contributed considerably to the readiness with which they came to contemplate the emergence of new member states in West Africa and Malaya—a considerable service to the world, as well as to Britain. But, assisted by the monumental error with which they crowned their disastrous failures in the Middle East in the Suez operation, this British failure of full understanding of the new Commonwealth was eventually to play its part in producing that delayed reaction to the

loss of imperial power, the full measure of whose consequences cannot yet be estimated.

But, to return to the earlier phase in the transformation of Empire, it was not of course only through Indian example that the model afforded by colonial self-government, the old Dominion model, influenced the character of political demands in the Dependent Empire, or, what is possibly more important, the response to them. Until Indian independence had shown that a similar development really could take place in the Coloured Empire, just as it had, long before, in that other Empire of the White Dominions, the full force of the example was limited. None the less, the notion that British colonies had progressed by stages to full self-government and that others might move along the same road even if not to the end of it undoubtedly influenced the politically minded in more than one dependency. Especially, perhaps, was this true in the West Indies, indubitably coloured but in historical fact, if not in legal theory, colonies of settlement, the place, if anywhere, where the two Empires met. Here was to be found the widest assortment of examples. Some, like Barbados, had never lost the old representative system though its significance as a measure of 'the government of men by themselves' is brought into a juster perspective if we realize that, as late as 1938, the electorate numbered 5,000 in a population of 200,000; others, like, Jamaica, after surrendering their old assemblies in the second half of the nineteenth century had again advanced to a legislature, partly official, partly nominated, partly elected, in this case by an electorate which in 1935 numbered 66,000 out of a total population of 1,122,000. In Jamaica, not only were officials in a minority but any nine of the fourteen electives could veto a financial bill. Others, again, like Trinidad had never had an assembly and the Governor's casting vote still, in 1938, ensured an official majority in the legislative council. West Indian history afforded as many examples of political

retrogression as of advance; but their relationship to the earliest stages in the evolution of the 'Dominion model' seemed obvious and undeniable. To British settlers in East and Central Africa that model seemed a no less obvious and undeniable 'natural right'. If it was only in Southern Rhodesia that they attained fully responsible government, their campaigns elsewhere focused attention on the implications of their political objective for Asians and, more remotely, Africans.

But the most important impact of the Dominion model was, perhaps, its 'demonstration effect' on the British themselves. The suitability of 'responsible government', the 'parliamentary system', the 'Westminster model', for such alien environments as the tropical dependencies provided was long and seriously questioned. More far-reaching, perhaps, were the doubts that Milner, still preoccupied with his 'two Empires', confided to his journal in 1923. 'We probably took a wrong road', he wrote, 'in trying to convert India into a Dominion. There is no natural basis for such a relationship between India and Great Britain or Australia or Canada, as there is for the relationship now in process of development between those predominantly British communities among themselves. On the other hand, the more important units of the Dependent Empire will not be content, as they grow up, to remain Dependent. And if we cannot successfully attempt to convert them into Dominions, and yet do not want them to become Foreign Nations, what is to be done? Political wisdom has to find a means, a new form of organization, a new tie which will keep them connected.'¹⁸

Milner's question remained unanswered. If the subsequent history of Dominion status in Ireland suggested the limitations of British 'political wisdom' in so completely rejecting the alternative scheme of external association propounded by De Valera, that of the newly independent states in the Middle East was, before long, to show the limitations of treaties

between evidently unequal 'partners' as a means of legitimizing a special relationship, that 'something in the nature of a new element in Imperial relations'¹⁹ of which Amery had hopefully spoken at the Imperial Conference of 1926. Meanwhile the notion that some form of self-government must one day come about 'at least in the more important units', however remote that day might be, was in marked contrast to other imperial habits of mind. When as late as 1944 General de Gaulle called a conference to reappraise French colonial experience and policy in Africa it began by declaring 'La constitution éventuelle même lointaine de self-governments dans les colonies est à écarter.'²⁰ That such a declaration would have been unthinkable in Britain no doubt owed something to the American Revolution but far more to the history of colonial self-government in what were then called the Dominions. However remote the prospect might seem for most of the Colonial Empire in the inter-war years, it was not inconceivable. To some it might portend the destruction of an Empire, but to others it would rather signal its fulfilment. Even in 1933 a distinguished British historian could, after all, say to a Canadian audience 'A Dominion of Nigeria, for example? Why not?'²¹ It was the possibility and, in a sense, the concreteness of such an idea that made the difference.

Some points of contact there were, then, between the six major themes that, looking back, we can detect in imperial policy during what Churchill has called 'another Thirty Years War'. Part at least of the climate of opinion in which colonial policy was developed and applied was provided by a world in which, especially after 1930, these themes were becoming more insistent. But their inter-relationship, so far as it was remarked at all, would seem to have been mainly in the world of ideas or at any rate of conversation in clubs rather than that of power and responsibility. Of course the institutions of British government were not such as wholly to isolate the

discharge of at least the highest responsibilities involved in each of these major themes from one another: in Parliament, as in the Cabinet, the same people considered and, so far as Britain was concerned, decided them all. That, however, by no means meant that the bearing of one thing on another was necessarily in mind. Even if it had, it would have affected only that small proportion of major issues which ultimately found their way to such exalted seats of decision and then only at a point at which they had been largely shaped by innumerable plans and decisions earlier arrived at in departmental or territorial isolation. No doubt the sheer magnitude and variety of the problems of the Commonwealth and Empire would always have precluded their being the primary responsibility of any single organ of the British government. In fact, historical accident, British conservatism, the natural distaste of the Dominions for having their evolving relationship with Britain handled by the Colonial Office, decreed that four separate Departments of State, the Dominions Office, the India Office, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office, should divide, rather than share, that responsibility.

The new Dominions Office was not established until 1925 and it was not until 1930 that the two posts of Colonial Secretary and Dominions Secretary were for the first time held by different people while all but the most senior of the staff of the two offices was in theory interchangeable until after the war. None the less they naturally became steadily more distinct and the movement of administrative staff between them ceased except, and then rarely, in the more junior posts.²² There was also a small block of work in the Dominions Office which some thought should have remained, where it properly belonged, in the Colonial Office, namely the oversight of administration in the three small territories under United Kingdom rule in South Africa, Basutoland, Swaziland, and Bechuanaland. The assumption that underlay this arrangement

was the possibility of their eventual transfer to South Africa. As that possibility slowly receded, the arrangement inevitably became politically more difficult to change, while its administrative conveniences became more entrenched. Its share in the neglect the territories suffered at least until the later 'thirties may have been exaggerated but it is doubtful whether it is altogether unfounded. That the Dominions Office should retain responsibility for Newfoundland, when in 1934 it reverted to what was in fact Crown Colony government, was no doubt inevitable. The experience offered some evident lessons about the limitations of the mere absence of responsible, or even representative, government as a means of solving the problems of a colonial economy. Whether they altogether escaped notice in the Colonial Office, we do not know, though that Department was responsible for British Guiana whose ancient constitution had in 1928 been replaced on somewhat similar financial grounds.

India remained—how could it be otherwise?—an Empire by itself, the responsibility of a third Secretary of State and an entirely separate India Office; Professor Mansergh, who himself served for some years in the Dominions Office, has recorded that 'Between these two departments, divided geographically only by the width of a Whitehall quadrangle, there was surprisingly little contact and a marked difference of outlook'. To this he ascribed some part in the reasons why the lessons to be learnt from experience in Ireland about 'the adaptability of dominion status to countries which were not *natural* dominions' . . . 'were in fact almost wholly ignored'²³ in guiding British policy in India. That same quadrangle divided the India Office from the Colonial Office: perhaps that was one reason why the lessons to be learnt from experience in India seem seldom to have been considered either, except on relatively technical matters such as finance, irrigation, forestry, or co-operation, where the Colonial Office sometimes

employed on expert missions to particular territories men with Indian experience. What might have been gained by some more systematic and persistent attempt at such a confrontation of Indian experience and the more general issues of colonial policy may be glimpsed from one example. Lord Hailey, the almost mythical example of Indian Civil Service brilliance, was persuaded on his retirement to turn his attention to Africa. Published in 1938, his massive *African Survey* made an outstanding contribution to the more dynamic and broadly based policy of colonial development and welfare defined in 1940. It was only the beginning of his impact on African policy; but, what, we may ask, if he had come to African affairs a little younger, or if there had been several, lesser mortals no doubt, who in the prime of their Indian experience could have been involved in African problems?

In the Middle East, British responsibilities were eventually divided²⁴ in 1921 between the new Middle Eastern Department of the Colonial Office, responsible for 'Iraq, Palestine, and Aden, and the Arab States under British influence' and the Foreign Office which remained the Department concerned with Egypt and with the Sudan, a territory which had everything in common with the tropical African colonies except its political status as an Anglo-Egyptian condominium. The main practical consequence of this Middle Eastern arrangement was to deflect much of the energy of successive colonial ministers into the hopeless politics of Palestine and to ensure that too much of the constructive talents of some of the abler men in the Colonial Service were exhausted in its cynical frustrations. If there was any truth in the allegation of Arab sympathies that Zionists and their supporters increasingly brought against both the Office and the Colonial Service, it is unnecessary to deduce that these were wholly or even mainly the outcome of the Department's brief association with Iraq or of its responsibilities in Transjordan or the Aden

Protectorate. There was, after all, quite enough in the historic, as well as the contemporary, experience of the Colonial Office elsewhere to account for such a bias against the claims of immigrant European settlers. The decision to assign these Middle Eastern responsibilities to the Colonial Office was almost certainly a mistake. That it failed to bring about any measure of unity in British policy in the Middle East can hardly be considered an important part of the count against it. The decision to allot Syria to the French and their expulsion of Feisal in 1920 had already put paid to what little chance of any such unity had been left by the Balfour Declaration—before the Middle Eastern Department of the Colonial Office had even been established.

No more than a series of administrative no-man's-lands poised uneasily between the well-defined 'Empires' of the major Departments of State, such marginal areas could hardly be significant in promoting that more comprehensive and co-ordinated Imperial programme which Imperialists only gradually tired of demanding and which foreign critics, especially the French, were prone to believe must exist. The major development of the earlier years between the wars was the gradual replacement of Milner's 'two Empires' by three. 'The Colonial Empire', Amery told the Imperial Conference in 1926, 'has, in fact, during the last generation, evolved as a separate constituent element in the Empire, different on the one side from the Dominions, in which I include for that purpose Great Britain as well . . . different also in very many respects . . . from the Empire of India.' For all its variety, this Colonial Empire, he claimed, none the less possessed 'a certain unity'. Although the numerous territories that made it up enjoyed, he was careful to mention, 'autonomous institutions in varying degree and ever-increasing measure', their governments were all, in the last resort, the responsibility of Parliament and the Secretary of State, they were nearly all in the tropics, and

they were 'mainly inhabited by populations of a non-white character'.²⁵

When the first world war broke out, considerable parts of the immense areas in Africa that had been brought within British jurisdiction in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had barely come under a settled administration. Tanganyika, with an area slightly larger than Nigeria, had only come under Colonial Office rule with the end of the war, its administration to be reconstructed practically from scratch. But as the period of incorporating these new territories within the effective area of British rule drew to an end in Africa, as it had a little earlier elsewhere in the newer tropical dependencies, an increase of production and trade began to show itself, and the revenue that followed began to be sufficient to support a somewhat more elaborate and developed administration. With the slow growth of this development, with an increasing realization of the possibilities, as well as the problems, of tropical medicine, agriculture, and education, and with better understanding of the intricacies of native social organization, colonial policy began to be considerably more complex, more specialized, and more active. But alike in the economic and the political sphere, the number of British people with direct personal interest in these areas was still relatively small, even if it was growing. As the Colonial Empire emerged as a distinct and recognizable entity, it also became one for specialists. It was a world of its own but a world apart.

In that world, a single 'blessed' word at once expressed the aspirations of policy and concealed their conflicting practical implications: Trusteeship. It was a word with a long and chequered history in British thought and practice about the problems of empire. But its contemporary elevation as the touchstone of policy in the inter-war years owed something to the international recognition it achieved in the Covenant of the League of Nations. It was the principle to be applied to those

ex-enemy territories which were 'inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. Their 'well-being and development' formed 'a sacred trust of civilization'. What this principle implied for those of these territories whose peoples had not 'reached a stage where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized' was administration by a Mandatory Power, subject to internationally prescribed conditions designed to ensure the absence of certain abuses to which experience (and especially, it must be said, British views of that experience) suggested colonial rule (and especially in British eyes, that of other powers) was regrettably liable: the continuance of slavery and the slave trade, the use of forced labour for private advantage, the demoralizing traffic in arms and spirits, the obstruction of missionary (and especially foreign missionary) activities, the use of colonial territories and colonial manpower to reinforce the armed strength of the colonial power. Except in the Pacific Mandates and South West Africa which, on the insistence of the Dominions governments concerned, were to be administered as integral portions of the Mandatory states, there was added the obligation to maintain the Open Door, 'equal opportunities for the trade and commerce' of all members of the League.

All these essentially negative injunctions were spelt out in more detail in the Mandates themselves which enjoined the Mandatory to respect the rights and safeguard the interests of the native population in regard to the holding or transfer of land, to ensure proper public control of its alienation to non-natives, to protect natives from fraudulent labour recruitment. They expressly prohibited the grant of monopolistic concessions or, in general, of economic privileges on a preferential basis to nationals of the Mandatory power and prescribed in detail the other requirements of an Open Door policy. Trusteeship, from this point of view, was a code designed to prevent the Trustee from acquiescing in certain kinds of abuse or indulging

in others, to his own advantage. But the Mandates themselves added a more positive condition; the Mandatory was to 'undertake to promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants'. Its generality was in marked contrast to the detail in which the prohibitions were prescribed, and it omitted any reference to the training of the inhabitants for the exercise of political responsibility.²⁶

The code applied of course only to the Mandated territories. But this should not lead us to underestimate its significance as an exposition of what in the years immediately after the war, British authorities regarded as at least the minimal requirements for good colonial administration. After all they had, to all intents and purposes, written it themselves. Amery's conviction that it was not likely that any mandate would 'impose upon us any conditions . . . we have not been in the habit of imposing upon ourselves'²⁷ was well founded. That was in 1919. Twenty years later, Governor Cameron looking back on his Tanganyika service recorded that the terms of the Mandate 'did not trouble or preoccupy my mind in any way': they were, he said, 'the ordinary and recognized principles of British Colonial Administration'.²⁸ No doubt, but Cameron had found them useful enough in his successful opposition to Amery's plan for establishing an East African Dominion under settler influence.

But it would be a gross travesty of either the ideas or the practice of trusteeship, at any rate in the inter-war years, to suggest that this largely negative code was all there was to them, as some recent critics have come near to implying, who,

look at the end of the work, contrast
the petty done, the undone vast.

Milner, Amery, Ormsby-Gore, the leading men at the Colonial Office for the greater part of the formative decade after

the war, were all profoundly convinced that the great task ahead was the positive one of economic and social, especially educational, development and they all knew, especially Ormsby-Gore, a great deal of what this meant in detail in the Colonial Empire. Even if they had not, there was another event in the early 'twenties which greatly influenced the contemporary definition of Trusteeship. In 1921 Lugard, the most famous of British African governors, published *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, in which he reflected on his life's work and propounded the theme that Europe was in Africa for 'the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane; that the benefit can be made reciprocal, and that it is the aim and desire of civilized administration to fulfil this dual mandate'.²⁹ This long, highly personal, repetitious, but immensely powerful book provided ample justification, largely from Lugard's own experience, of the importance of those negative—perhaps it is fairer to say protective—aspects of the doctrine of trusteeship as the Mandates attempted to define it. The abuses they sought to prohibit had in large part been the accompaniment of that relatively short but decisive period of European Imperial expansion in Africa and the Pacific that took place in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and of its consolidation in the first decade of our own. That period had been characterized by a widespread emphasis on the urgency of rapid economic development for the advantage of the European countries and some impatient contempt, even in Britain, for the principles of the humanitarian period that preceded it. European enterprise, whether by settlers, plantations, or mining enterprises, had for a time been represented as the only effective form of development in the tropics. J. A. Hobson's powerful critique of *Imperialism*, first published in 1902, however it may be assessed as a contribution to economic history, had done much, aided by the publicity given to the Congo scandals in the years that

followed, to discredit that conception and not only in the more radical flanks of the rising Labour Party. It still, of course, survived, especially in the small but influential group which had sunk so much emotional capital in the South African idea but it was soon to be progressively weakened by the actual development of 'native policy' in South Africa especially after the first Nationalist government of 1924. Lugard's *Dual Mandate* not only supplied much evidence of its dangers but, more important, offered an alternative approach: 'Develop resources through the agency of the natives under European guidance, and not by direct European ownership of those tropical lands which are unsuited for European settlement.'³⁰ Apart from the problem of countries like Kenya, parts of which *were* suitable, many conflicts were, of course, inherent in the conception of the Dual Mandate.

Any prospect there might be of reconciling them clearly depended on the maintenance of colonial rule, the final authority of the trustee, for an unspecified period. 'The era of complete independence', Lugard wrote, was 'not as yet visible on the horizon of time.'³¹ This would have been so even if his conception of indirect rule—rule by native chiefs subordinate to the control of the protecting power—had not appeared to offer an alternative to the development of representative government as the basis of a policy more suited to African genius. If such an alternative, whatever its potentialities, was to be reconciled with 'the dual responsibility of controlling powers in the tropics viz. as trustees to civilization for the adequate development of their resources and as trustees for the welfare of native races' it was evidently a long-term prospect.

In one perspective, the Dual Mandate was a far more realistic restatement of a much older approach to the problem, one with a continuous history from the mid-nineteenth-century humanitarian vision of Buxton and Venn that if Africans were not deprived of their land or their freedom to engage in 'a

just and legitimate trade' and were helped in a programme of agricultural development, they could do it for themselves, the vision that Dickens had satirized as Borrioboola-Gha in *Bleak House*,³² and that Mary Kingsley and E. D. Morel, whose great campaign finally brought the Congo atrocities to an end, had sustained at the turn of the century. In another perspective, it was the very doctrine that Chamberlain himself propounded. He had proclaimed in 1895 the task of development in the dependencies 'for the benefit of their population and for the benefit of the greater population which is outside'.³³ Too many of his ardent disciples put all their emphasis on the second aim with a perfunctory assertion that it *must* benefit the natives. Even the best of them were suspiciously ready to applaud the *arrière pensée* in Milner's contention that the natives of Tanganyika (and elsewhere) 'might easily find themselves worse off under a just but penurious and unprogressive administration than under one which, while less careful of their rights, was more zealous in developing the resources of their country'.³⁴ It was nevertheless true that, in hands less forceful and dynamic than those of Lugard, the weakness of this approach was its tendency to relapse into complacent satisfaction at the absence of traditional abuses and to overlook the stagnation of native society, or the social and other dangers that might be concealed even by successful economic growth.

The emphasis of trusteeship was then, in the first place, 'protective' and that, especially among the critics of colonial policy, in a somewhat negative fashion. In the second place, it was on the promotion, so far as might be consistent with that protective character, of economic and social development. Whether that development was to be brought about 'by the agency of the natives through European guidance' or by more direct European enterprise and what was the appropriate scope of state action continued to be warmly debated, especially in relation to East and Central Africa. But, at least among those

who had not written off the whole enterprise as a more than unusually sordid example of capitalist exploitation, there was an increasingly general realization that development, and research, on which it must depend, were the two great needs of the Colonial Empire and that both would have largely to be promoted by government. Development by the agency of natives through European guidance called more obviously than development by direct European enterprise for much more extended and more expert agricultural, forestry, and medical services in the colonies. Lugard recognized the claims of development but he also emphasized the case for careful study and adaptation of native society to the new needs in such matters as land tenure, labour recruitment, education, the development of mineral resources and of industries processing raw materials or supplying the simpler needs of local markets. The exponents of trusteeship recognized in short, in the jargon of a later age, that development required an economic infrastructure and technical assistance. That in retrospect they seem to have grappled so slowly and so inadequately with these more positive tasks is, of course, the result of many factors, most of all the climate of economic fact and opinion in an era during the greater part of which the effective demand for the primary products of the Colonial Empire was low because industrial economies, more especially that of Britain, remained chronically below full employment.

But there was a more long-term obstacle which assumed greater importance during the brief period of relative prosperity, between the first post-war slump and the great depression, that coincided with Amery's tenure of the Colonial Office. It was the continued dominance of the doctrine that French writers rather engagingly call '*le self-supporting*', a doctrine succinctly defined by the third Earl Grey in the middle of the nineteenth century: 'the surest test of the soundness of measures for the improvement of an uncivilized people,

is that they should be self-supporting'.³⁵ The trustee was not to use his own money to make the ward's estate more productive. The most he might do was to use his own credit to guarantee a loan. Colonial revenues must be able to meet the service of any loans they were permitted to raise and the salaries of any staff they were permitted to employ. If a breach was at last made in this doctrine in 1929 when the first Colonial Development Act was passed, it was a small one and the great depression ensured that its practical effects were even smaller than its authors had expected. Throughout the inter-war years, the day-to-day consequences of this accepted attitude towards colonial finance were numerous and obvious. But even more important than the practical limitations it imposed were its pervasive but more subtle consequences on the thinking of almost all who were at all actively concerned with those institutions in which colonial policy was shaped.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹ S. R. Mehrotra, 'On the Use of the Term "Commonwealth"' (*Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 1-13), shows that, among others, Bernard Shaw, Campbell-Bannerman, Goldwin Smith, and Merriman (the Cape statesman) advocated 'Commonwealth' in place of Empire at various times between 1885 and 1905.

² First officially used in the Anglo-Irish 'Treaty' of 1921. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³ The word 'ineffective' may be criticized on the ground that discriminatory legislation, such as the Land Apportionment Act of 1931, was discussed with the British Government before its introduction in S. Rhodesia. It remains true that the veto was never used and that 'Any British Government would clearly have been reluctant from the start to intervene in the affairs of a self-governing colony, and after the first few years intervention became progressively more difficult' (P. Mason, *Year of Decision* (London, 1960), p. 3).

⁴ *Minutes of the Imperial War Conference* (Cd. 8566), 1917, p. 5.

⁵ 20 August 1917. *Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms* (Cd. 9109), 1918, para. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 7.

⁷ Quoted by T. de Vere White, 'Arthur Griffith', in C. C. O'Brien (ed.), *The Shaping of Modern Ireland* (London, 1960), p. 67.

⁸ O'Brien, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

⁹ L. S. Amery, *My Political Life*, Vol. II (London, 1953), p. 194.

¹⁰ These Lectures were delivered before the publication of Elizabeth Monroe's brilliant book *Britain's Moment in the Middle East 1914-1956* (London, 1963).

¹¹ Miss Monroe writes 'Measured by British interests alone' the Declaration 'was one of the greatest mistakes in our imperial history', *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹² Commons *Hansard*, 17 February 1922, c. 1461-2, quoted by A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and its Enemies* (London, 1959), p. xi.

¹³ Thornton, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

¹⁴ S. R. Mehrotra, 'Imperial Federation and India 1868-1917'. *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. I (1961), p. 34.

¹⁵ G. K. Gokhale, *Speeches* (Madras s.d., ?1909), p. 782.

¹⁶ Sir W. S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, Vol. I (London, 1948), p. 27.

¹⁷ Mehrotra, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁸ Viscount Milner, *Questions of the Hour* (new edition, London, 1925), p. 204.

¹⁹ *Imperial Conference, 1926. Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings* (Cmd. 2769), 1927, p. 134. As Miss Monroe puts it, 'the plans adopted for immediate use were various but the end was the same—to evolve a compromise between the Middle Eastern wish for independence and the British wish to retain partial control', *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²⁰ *La Conférence Africaine Française, Brazzaville 1944* (Paris, 1945), p. 32.

²¹ Sir R. Coupland, *The Empire in These Days* (London, 1935), p. 179.

²² In 1940, Sir Cosmo Parkinson, then Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, was transferred to the corresponding post in the Dominions Office when Sir George Gater, the Clerk of the London County Council, was brought in to the former post. But he returned after four months when Sir George Gater was temporarily transferred to the new Ministry of Home Security.

²³ P. N. S. Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy 1931-1939* (London, 1952), p. 271.

²⁴ According to Lord Beaverbrook, *The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George* (London, 1963), pp. 40-41, Sir W. Churchill had intended that the Colonial Office should also take over Egypt from the Foreign Office but was balked by Lord Curzon.

²⁵ Cmd. 2769, p. III.

²⁶ The best discussion of the Mandate arrangements is H. D. Hall, *Mandates, Dependencies and Trusteeships* (London, 1948).

²⁷ Commons *Hansard*, 30 July 1919, c. 2175.

²⁸ Sir D. Cameron, *My Tanganyika Service and some Nigeria* (London, 1939), p. 20.

²⁹ Sir F. D. (later Lord) Lugard, *op. cit.* (third edition, London, 1926), p. 617.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 506.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

³² For the reality behind this see Professor J. F. A. Ajayi, 'Henry Venn and the Policy of Development', *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*, Vol. I (1959), pp. 331-42, and his unpublished London Ph.D. thesis, 'Christian Missions and the Making of Nigeria, 1841-1891'; also P. D. Curtin, *The Image of Africa* (Madison, 1964), pp. 300-4.

³³ Commons *Hansard*, 22 August 1895, c. 642.

³⁴ Milner, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-3.

³⁵ Earl Grey, *The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration*, Vol. II (London, 1853), p. 281.

II

THE INSTITUTIONS OF COLONIAL POLICY

In 1897, Sir George Goldie, the head of the Royal Niger Company, told Chamberlain 'whatever may be the present activity of the Colonial Office, it cannot be permanently a creative machine. Its main business . . . is that of control—the "governor" of the steam engine and not the boiler. Its officials are brought up from the first in this all-important work of control, which develops an entirely different habit from that of initiating and administering.'¹ Even Chamberlain's galvanizing activity could not greatly change these habits of an able but increasingly overworked bureaucracy or the ingrained distaste of a still Gladstonian Treasury for imperial expenditure on which those habits largely rested. Margery Perham's great biography of Lugard makes that clear though it certainly does not support the harsher verdict of Chamberlain's private secretary, a Colonial Office man himself, who told a younger colleague just before the first war, 'Oh, Joe was a great man. He woke the office up and it has been going to sleep ever since'.² All the critics, then and later, conceded the ability, the industry, and the knowledge of its officials—at least so far as knowledge could be acquired in Downing Street. What was wanting was variously described: the touch of reality that only practical experience, or at least some first-hand appreciation, of colonial conditions could bring, sympathy and a more lively sense of partnership with the 'men on the spot', and, more fundamental, as an outstanding governor, Sir Donald Cameron, put it, 'constructive thinking where large issues are involved'.³

Some of this criticism was of the kind which is endemic between men at headquarters and men in the field. Some of it was the inescapable result of the functions of the Colonial Office as a supervisory and controlling organ and one, moreover, obliged, whatever its own views, to work within a system whose dominant assumptions for long precluded any direct financial assistance from the metropole to the colonies unless in dire need and as a last resort. Some of it reflected the fact that the administrative staff of the Office formed part of the Home Civil Service, recruited by the stiffest of competitive examinations, while those of the colonies, except in Ceylon, Malaya, and Hong Kong, where they were chosen by the same method, were appointed by the patronage of the Secretary of State. Colonial Office men were widely suspected (not always unjustly) of thinking themselves very much the intellectual superiors of most of the colonial administrators, some of whom returned the compliment by pointing to the lack of practical experience in Whitehall.⁴

In 1919, the Office⁵ was still much as it had been in Chamberlain's time, although since 1907 there had been a separate division for the Dominions. The Colonies division consisted of seven geographical departments, each dealing with a particular area like the Far East or the West Indies, and one general department which handled a variety of miscellaneous subjects, mostly of minor importance, which affected the colonies generally. Apart from a legal adviser, all the superior staff was 'administrative'. No medical, agricultural, technical, or scientific staff were employed in the Office itself. The Crown Agents for the Colonies acted as commercial and financial agents for all the non-self-governing territories and were financed entirely by the payments those territories made for their services. In their offices there was a permanent engineering staff, primarily concerned with the supervision of contracts and the design and inspection of equipment ordered by the colonies,

whose advice in engineering problems was of course available to the Colonial Office. There were long-established contacts between the Office and experts working in such places as the Imperial Institute, the Royal Botanic Gardens (whose Director, since 1902, had had the title 'Botanical Adviser to the Secretary of State'), and the London and Liverpool Schools of Tropical Medicine. In the London School of Tropical Medicine a Tropical Diseases Bureau had been established. It was maintained by contributions from the British government and from Dominion and Colonial governments, and managed by a committee responsible to the Secretary of State, including a number of distinguished medical authorities as well as members of the Colonial Office staff. Similar arrangements applied to the Tropical Diseases Research Fund, established in 1904, and the Imperial Bureau of Entomology (to whose income of £4,570 the British government contributed £500). There were also two Advisory Committees whose members included 'outside experts' as well as officials, the Colonial Survey Committee (established in 1905) to advise on survey problems and the Advisory Medical and Sanitary Committee for Tropical Africa, established in 1909. For all these bodies, the Colonial Office provided the secretariats. With such an organization, the Colonial Office was not conspicuously suited to playing any effective part in setting up 'a new and more positive standard of our duty and obligation towards the peoples to whom this house is in the position of trustee'⁶ which Amery, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies, had told the House of Commons as early as July 1919 would be the task of reconstruction in the Colonial Empire.

The history of the Colonial Office (and of the Colonial Service) in the inter-war years could be written in terms of their gradual, though by no means complete, adaptation for such a task. That it was so gradual no doubt owed something to the conservatism of some officials. It owed far more to the prevailing

climate of ideas about what was sound economic and financial policy for colonies and to the effects of economic depression: the retrenchment that followed the first post-war slump of 1921 provided a kind of rehearsal for the more desperate setback that followed in 1931. And, although this cannot be fully assessed until the records are available to scholars, it owed a good deal to Treasury parsimony in instances where, even by the standards of the day, the expense involved was trifling. Soon after he ceased to be Colonial Secretary in 1921, Milner bluntly asserted that the Colonial Office was 'the Cinderella of the great public departments. In the annual autumnal battle of the Treasury with all the other Offices over the preparation of the Estimates, Cinderella stands a poor chance. When "economy" is in the saddle, she stands no chance at all.'

Yet, between 1919 and 1929 'the British government spent on the Colonies (including Palestine and Iraq) a total of £81.8 million in all kinds of assistance' (a sum which may be compared with their total annual expenditure which, in 1929, was something over £72 million). Of the £81.8 million, however, no less than £51 million represented military and air force expenditure in Iraq which also accounted for a further £7.5 million of other 'kinds of assistance'. British expenditure on all the other territories that made up the Colonial Empire was thus about £23 million. In the period 1929-1940, that of the first Colonial Development Act, expenditure outside the Act was £19.9 million while advances totalling £8.8 million were approved under the Act, of which about £6.5 million was actually spent in these years. Loans totalling £8.6 million were also written off under the Act of 1940 but £5.5 million of this represented the cost of building the Uganda railway in the last years of the nineteenth century. The conclusion of a distinguished authority that 'the habit of finding large sums for expenditure in the colonies was well

established long before it became a formal policy⁸ thus requires qualification. Over the inter-war years as a whole such sums averaged, if Iraq is excluded, just over £2 million a year.

Milner, indeed, spoke with the bitterness of experience. For what he had 'without hesitation' affirmed was 'the most urgent and vital' question in the colonies—the adequate application of science to the conservation and development of their resources⁹—the Office had in 1919 obtained a Parliamentary grant of £20,000 a year to be spent on research in the poorer territories, only to see this reduced to £2,000 in the 'economy' campaign of 1921. The modest expenditure needed to make a start in equipping the Colonial Office (and, as we shall see, the Colonial Service) for setting that 'new and more positive standard' of the duties of trusteeship of which Amery had spoken seems to have been forthcoming only with great difficulty.

Already in 1919 Members of Parliament had urged that the Office should be freed from its Dominion responsibilities to concentrate on the task of development in the Colonial Empire. The political arguments for such a change were of course reinforced by the new position assumed by the Dominions during and immediately after the war but it was only in 1925 that Amery succeeded in getting this done when he became Secretary of State. Even then, the decision was delayed for months because the Treasury declined to pay the new Permanent Under-Secretary of the Dominions Office the normal salary of such a post.¹⁰ Although the separation of the two offices was no doubt a prerequisite of the adaptation of the Colonial Office for a more positive role, the full effect can only have been delayed by the arrangement by which Amery and, for a time, his successor, Sidney Webb, held both portfolios while the decision in 1921 to assign to the Colonial Office Britain's new responsibilities in the Middle East was to deflect much of its energies to the intractable politics of Palestine.

But gradually the Office was equipped and organized to meet some of the needs of the enlarged conception of its task in the Colonial Empire. Specialist advisers began to appear on its staff. The first, in 1921, was a personal (and unpaid) post of 'adviser on business matters' which lapsed in 1923.¹¹ In that year an Advisory Committee on Education in Tropical Africa was set up, with a full-time secretary, Hanns Vischer, the remarkable Swiss missionary, who had become in 1908 the first Director of Education in Northern Nigeria.¹² This, incidentally, was made possible by the support of the African governors and was paid for jointly by the African colonies themselves. Vischer was in effect an educational adviser for tropical Africa. Five years later the Committee's scope was extended to the whole Colonial Empire and Arthur Mayhew from the Indian Education Service became joint secretary and responsible for educational advice for the non-African colonies. The later twenties saw the appointment of a succession of advisers: Medical (1926), Economic and Financial, Fisheries (1928), Agriculture (1929), Animal Health (1930). The last three were paid for by contributions from the colonies or from other funds not under normal Treasury control.¹³ The depression brought a halt to this, as to many other consequences of the rethinking of the problems of colonial development which took place between the first post-war slump and the great depression. It was not until 1938 that the next such post was created, that of Labour Adviser, a direct consequence of the series of labour 'disturbances' in the West Indies. Almost all the advisers—many more followed after 1940—were men who had had outstanding careers in the Colonial Service. They travelled extensively and helped to bring the Office into much closer contact with the men in their own branches of the Colonial Service.

There was a somewhat similar development of Advisory Committees. To those concerned with medicine and edu-

cation, others were added, notably the Colonial Advisory Council on Agriculture and Animal Health set up in 1929.¹⁴ Through them the Office was also brought in touch with a wider range of expert knowledge and opinion in Britain itself. Both Advisers and Advisory Committees have of course been criticized and it is certainly arguable that eventually the Colonial Office had too much of a good thing.¹⁵ But in the inter-war years, the Advisory Committees played an important part in bringing more and more of British scientific and professional expertise to bear on colonial problems and so helped to build up a small but powerful body of informed opinion in Britain.

After 1930 a new development began. Amery had considered, but rejected, the possibility of reorganizing the Colonial Office completely, substituting for the traditional geographical distribution of work a wholly functional arrangement. He had seen in the development of the adviser system the best method of combining expert knowledge in the various technical problems of development with the need for continuity in policy and regard for the widely differing political and social circumstances of individual territories. But as the sphere of government widened, and the scope of international action¹⁶ increased, the advantages of a functional organization of the administrative work itself became more and more evident, in the Colonial Office as elsewhere. Nowhere was this more striking than in economics: the problems of marketing rubber or oilseeds, or of settling the basic principles on which mineral exploitation could be most advantageously organized in the interests of the community, were matters in which a general knowledge of the particular circumstances of an individual territory was by no means enough.

Until the second world war, when they rapidly overtook geographical departments and advisers in importance, the development of functional departments was very slow. Three departments concerned with the recruitment and training,

promotion and conditions of service of the Colonial Service itself were the first to appear in 1930. The next, in 1932, was an Economic Section which became in 1934 an Economic Department, partly the outcome of the great depression, the extension of Imperial Preference, and the development of commodity restrictive schemes, but also of the appointment in 1932 as Secretary of State of Sir Philip Cunliffe Lister, previously four times President of the Board of Trade.¹⁷ One of its first members actually was an economist, Sir Sydney Caine, later Director of the London School of Economics. In 1938, a Social Service Department followed, and soon after a Development Department, intended for the financial and administrative problems of the new Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940. By 1960 there were still only nine geographical departments but twenty-one specialist departments, thirty scientific and technical advisers, and twenty-three advisory committees. A cynic might add that the Colonial Empire was fast ceasing to exist, but it is perhaps more to the point that almost the entire organization of scientific and technical advisory services was in the following year transferred to the new Department of Technical Co-operation where it has been redeployed to meet the needs of newly independent states both within and outside the Commonwealth, as well as continuing to serve those of the remaining dependencies.

Other changes were made in the 'twenties and 'thirties which show that some Ministers at least felt that there was something in the reproach of aloofness from the colonies which, especially in the earlier years, had been so frequently levelled at the Office. Between 1921 and 1947 only one of the Permanent Heads of the Office had himself been a member of its staff.¹⁸ Amery records that his 'first concern' was to bring the Office itself into more direct contact with the colonies. To this end he was 'determined that the new head of the Office should be someone who knew what it felt like, when toiling away in

stifling heat, to get a stuffy dispatch from Whitehall',¹⁹ so he appointed the Governor of Jamaica to that post. He, in turn, was succeeded in 1933 by the Governor General of the Sudan, while between 1930 and 1942 several other governors were brought in as Assistant Under-Secretaries. Amery also adopted a deliberate policy of arranging that his Parliamentary and his Permanent Under-Secretary should get away from the Office on visits to the colonies and of sending other members of the staff on special missions as secretaries of commissions of inquiry, or in a few cases for spells of service. By 1930 twenty-four of the administrative staff of fifty-four had made such visits or served in the colonies. Increasing numbers of colonial civil servants were also being attached to the Office for short periods. The two Colonial Office Conferences²⁰ of 1927 and 1930 attended by Governors or the most senior officials from almost all parts of the Colonial Empire exemplified both the new tendency to treat the Colonial Empire as a single entity and the attempt to improve contact between the Office and the men on the spot. Their main preoccupations were the reorganization of the Colonial Services, especially the scientific services, and the development of communications and transport.

In 1930 it was finally decided, as the result of a report by a committee presided over by Sir Warren Fisher, the Permanent Secretary of the British Treasury, not to amalgamate the Office with the Colonial Service because its work was 'in its essentials different from the work of Colonial Administrations'.²¹ Instead a more organized and regular system of interchange was adopted under which new entrants to the Colonial Office staff would normally serve a two years' secondment to a colonial administration after their first few years in the Office while a number of colonial civil servants would serve a similar period in the Office.

Strictly speaking, the Colonial Service, to which we must

next turn, did not exist, in 1919 or even in 1930. Each territory was a separate unit of government, with its own administrative and technical services, its own scales of pay and conditions of service. These administrative systems, it was true, were 'sometimes described as The Colonial Service, as though they constituted a single Service'. 'Such an illusion', the Warren Fisher Committee remarked, 'does not survive the most cursory examination.'²² All appointments were made by the Governor. The lower levels were filled locally, but vacancies requiring new appointments in the higher grades had to be notified to the Colonial Office. The Governor might of course recommend the appointment of someone in the territory, whether a native or not. But the Secretary of State normally selected a candidate and the Governor then appointed him. Before the first world war, candidates were interviewed by two of the assistant private secretaries who recorded their particulars and when a vacancy was notified produced a field of possible candidates from those on their books and made a proposal to the Secretary of State. One of the private secretaries was a Colonial Office official, the other was a personal appointment by the Secretary of State. The latter post was comparatively junior and also temporary, since a new Secretary of State might not wish to retain his predecessor's nominee.

In 1911 a new incumbent had been appointed to the latter post, a man of utter integrity and remarkable vision such as an otherwise hopelessly indefensible system of this sort occasionally throws up. He was a young man, just down from Oxford and, partly because of the oddity of the system, he was to remain in charge of the recruitment and training of the Colonial Service until his retirement as Sir Ralph Furse in 1948.²³ When he came back to the Colonial Office in 1919 after war service the increasing scale and widening scope of colonial government evidently demanded an altogether new approach to the problem of recruitment. Especially in agriculture, forestry, and

veterinary work, the supply of men with the qualifications required did not exist. It had to be created. There were three distinct but related problems.

First, Furse was convinced that qualities of character and temperament were of such special importance in colonial conditions that for all appointments, specialist as well as administrative, it was essential to maintain and develop a system of individual selection which would seek to give full weight to such qualities, however difficult they might be to assess, rather than to turn over to a system of competitive examination such as that which had been adopted, following the Indian model, for administrative and police posts in the Far Eastern territories, Ceylon, Hong Kong, and Malaya. This was no easy task since the system Furse had inherited was obviously vulnerable to accusations, however unjustified, of jobbery and some at least of his own colleagues, themselves the product of competitive examination, were convinced 'there was nothing like leather'. This problem was not finally settled until 1930 when the Warren Fisher Committee endorsed the system of selection by interview but recognized that it was 'open to criticism first and foremost as being one of patronage', which 'could not, in theory be defended'. Furse and his three assistants should accordingly be incorporated in the permanent staff of the Colonial Office and the final recommendation of a candidate for a colonial appointment should in future be made by a Board nominated by the Civil Service Commission. These proposals were accepted by Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield) who had become Secretary of State in the Labour government while, as Amery had foreseen, Warren Fisher's support ensured Treasury agreement. Two years later the administrative posts which had been filled by competitive examination since the eighteen-seventies were brought within the new system.²⁴ As the opportunities available elsewhere in the Colonial Empire without examination became better known, there had been increasing

difficulty in securing enough candidates for them by the old one.

Secondly, the scope and possibilities offered by the Colonial Empire must somehow be presented to the young men of Britain in a way which would enable them to compete, as offering a career comparable with the other great public services in Britain and India and especially with the All India Services. This, as Furse had long argued, and Amery and Ormsby-Gore, his political masters, fully agreed, called for some degree of standardization of salaries and conditions of service for similar jobs in different territories so that officers could be transferable between them without necessarily being offered promotion. This was most important for the smaller and poorer territories which otherwise had little chance of ever getting the best men. Chamberlain had proposed a unified Colonial Service in the 'nineties: in this, as in so many other things, he anticipated developments which it took nearly half a century to achieve. Furse himself had put the idea to Milner as early as 1919. For the next ten years, he worked through a series of expert committees set up to consider what could be done to improve recruitment and provide for training in forestry, agricultural, veterinary, medical, and scientific research services.²⁵ All of them urged the importance of unifying the miscellaneous appointments in their respective fields but those which were most specific about how this was to be done thought that the new unified services would have to be financed by a central fund to which all colonies contributed. On that rock these schemes foundered. The Warren Fisher Committee strongly urged unification which would, it said, raise the prestige of the Colonial Service and secure, 'so far as is humanly possible that the best officers should have the chance of rising to the top'. Though this would involve some scheme of related salary scales, it need not be financed from a central fund. Unification would bring substantial benefits to all colonies and special

advantages to the smaller ones. It was, the Committee said, 'an issue of the very first importance from the point of view of Colonial Development'.

For the next decade the new Colonial Service Division of the Office, which the Warren Fisher Committee also recommended, was busy with the creation of the new Unified Services, like the Colonial Administrative Service set up in 1932 and followed by the Colonial Medical Service, the Colonial Agricultural Service, and so on. For most of them specific professional qualifications and further special post-graduate training were required of all new entrants. The standard, as well as the number, of candidates undoubtedly improved. It was not the fault of those responsible for colonial policy that, far from the continuing expansion they could reasonably expect in the late 'twenties (between 1924 and 1929 new recruitment for these administrative and professional appointments averaged over 450 a year), the world economic depression and the catastrophic fall in colonial revenue it produced made it impossible even to maintain much of what had so laboriously been achieved. In 1932 when the revenue of most colonies was only half what it had been in 1929 the total recruitment fell to 70; although it recovered, it never again equalled the 1924-9 average until the second world war ended in 1945.²⁶

But the most far-reaching result of this era was in connexion with the third problem, the development of new forms of training and the establishment of new institutions both to provide that training and to direct and stimulate the research needed if it was to be relevant to tropical problems. To create the supply of suitable men which the early twenties had shown did not exist, scholarships were established to enable men with a basic scientific or professional training to equip themselves in forestry, agricultural, and veterinary work. To train them new institutions were established in the Colonial Empire or in

Britain. The Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture where the agricultural scholars took a year's post-graduate training was opened in Trinidad in 1922. Once again the cost was at first met mainly by colonial governments though there was an imperial contribution and substantial grants were later made by the Empire Marketing Board and the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation. A proposal for an Imperial Forestry Institute, for post-graduate training of forestry officers for British as well as overseas service, had been turned down by the Treasury in 1921. In 1924, mainly as a result of Furse's intervention at the Empire Forestry Conference held in Canada the year before, it was opened in Oxford. Its annual cost was then put at £5,000, the greater part to be met by colonial governments.²⁷ Such examples (there are many others) surely go far to substantiate Amery's description of the Treasury as a 'surly watchdog'.²⁸

In 1925 Amery accepted another proposal, which Furse had also originally suggested to Milner in 1919, that the 'rather sketchy' three months' training at the Imperial Institute for men selected for administrative posts in tropical Africa, which had originally been established in 1909, should be replaced by longer courses at Oxford and Cambridge. Such courses would also serve to publicize in those two vital centres of recruitment the opportunities offered by the Colonial Service. Except to the extent that the universities were able to provide teaching staff, these courses, which were enlarged in 1933 to include Malaya, and in 1945 extended to all colonies, were financed until 1945 wholly by colonial funds. The setting up of the Advisory Committee on Education in Tropical Africa led to the opening in 1928 at the London Day Training College of what was probably the first course of teacher training designed exclusively to meet the special needs of developing countries.²⁹ This later became the Department of Education in Tropical Areas of the Institute of Education at London

University. By 1938 80 per cent of the new entrants to the Colonial Service received special training before taking up their appointments, the majority for a year or longer.³⁰ In a few years all this had a profound effect on the awareness of the needs and problems of the Colonial Empire among many of Britain's leading scientists and academics.

There was one aspect of these changes in the organization of the Colonial Service which deserved more attention than it ever received and whose importance was bound to increase as the years passed. In recommending unification, the Warren Fisher Committee had thought it well to say that it did not 'suggest that the system should be carried to the length of becoming a positive hindrance to the local promotion of officers of first-rate ability'.³¹ Yet it was surely inevitable that at the very least it should make it less likely that there should be such officers to promote. If they had the initial qualifications required, which roughly speaking amounted to a university degree or its equivalent, they would not be attracted to the subordinate ranks of the local civil service, while if they had not and joined the local civil service from school, they were most likely to find the way blocked, unless indeed their 'first rate ability' was phenomenally evident, because they were not so qualified. Until 1942 indeed candidates presenting themselves for selection for first appointments in the Colonial Administrative Service were required to be of 'pure European descent' though there was no regulation precluding the appointment of local men to posts in a colony normally filled by officers of that Service and a few were. Nothing is more striking in retrospect than the absence of any attempt to encourage the people of the colonies to equip themselves for public employment at the levels of the unified services.

Had it been considered, the experience of Ceylon was in fact particularly instructive on this point. Some Ceylonese had been appointed to the administrative service even in the

middle of the nineteenth century and when the new competitive examination was introduced in 1856, designed for university graduates, some continued to be appointed locally by the Governor. After 1870 the examination was held simultaneously in London and Ceylon but as there were very few Ceylonese with British university degrees it was now more difficult for Ceylonese to compete and in 1880 the Ceylon examinations were discontinued. In 1891, however, a separate Local Division was established in the civil service and some of the administrative posts were actually reserved for its members, with the result that by 1920 eleven of the ninety higher administrative posts were held by Ceylonese. This Local Division was abolished in 1920 and it was decided that one-third of all new appointments to the administrative service should be filled by Ceylonese. The proportion was increased to a half in 1923. If sufficient Ceylonese were not forthcoming from the London examination a local examination was to be held. But it was soon clear that there was now a sufficient supply of local graduates, partly as a result of the opening of the Ceylon University College, and the examination was, after 1924, again held simultaneously in London and Ceylon. By 1930 fifty-five of the administrative posts were held by Ceylonese and eighty-three by Europeans. Recruitment of Europeans was suspended in 1931, resumed in 1935, and again suspended after 1937. By 1940 the figures were almost exactly reversed.³²

Ceylon, of course, was the most advanced colonial territory and any such prospects might be thought quite remote in tropical Africa. So no doubt as a general rule they were in the 'thirties, yet in the Gold Coast Guggisberg, the most far-sighted Governor of the age, had produced in 1926 a twenty-year plan under which the number of Africans holding what were termed 'European appointments' which was then twenty-eight should rise to 148 in 1936 and 229 in 1946. By that time, he calculated, they would represent nearly half the total. Such

precise planning is no doubt impracticable but by 1938 there were actually only forty-one. The failure was partly due to the changed outlook brought by the world economic depression and especially the fact that facilities for local higher education were not developed as Guggisberg had hoped.³³ Yet even in 1927 the Director of Colonial Scholars told the Colonial Office Conference that there were forty-six West Africans then studying at British universities, and when in 1942 two Africans were appointed to the district administration of the Gold Coast one was an Oxford, the other a Cambridge, graduate and both measured up to the highest standards of British or Dominion recruits to the Colonial Administrative Service.

The reorganization of the Colonial Service undoubtedly improved its quality and efficiency as an instrument of development. But it is hard to believe that its concentration on the requirement for British officers did not adversely affect the opportunities for natives of the colonies in their own public service. At the end of the second world war, a Colonial Office White Paper went far towards admitting this indictment. There were, it said, 'potential candidates in the Colonies, both inside and outside the Civil Service, who have hitherto had no opportunity of acquiring the same standard of education as candidates from the United Kingdom or the Dominions'.³⁴ Over the next ten years £1 million would therefore be allocated by the British government to enable selected colonial candidates to receive professional and vocational training which would qualify them for appointment to the higher grades of the Colonial Service. It was, however, much later in the day than most people had yet begun to realize and especially in East and Central Africa the lack of qualified and experienced African civil servants today is perhaps the most immediate danger to the stability and growth of the new states emerging there.

Meanwhile all this reshaping of the Colonial Services mostly

affected the younger men. What kind of people were those at the top, the Governors themselves, who remained at the decisive point in the making and application of policy? Leaving on one side the three 'fortress' colonies, Gibraltar, Malta, and Bermuda, where by long-standing arrangement the Governor was always a serving General, 103 men held office between 1919 and 1939 as Governors in the remaining thirty colonial administrations. Rather more than half (54) had actually begun their careers in the Colonial Service. Of these sixteen had joined as Eastern cadets, twenty had begun in tropical Africa (of whom seven had started in Kenya and five in Nigeria). Of the remaining eighteen, three had begun by getting a job on a Governor's personal staff as private secretary or A.D.C. Six others had begun as clerks in the West Indies, where three had been born, including Sir Donald Cameron who was certainly one of the two or three outstanding Governors of the period. Both these methods of entry were backdoors which the new system was virtually certain to close. Two more were men from the professional services, one doctor and one lawyer.

Of the forty-nine whose first jobs had not been in the Colonial Service, no less than twenty-eight had been army officers. Seven of these had found their way into the Colonial Service after military employment in a colony, six more came by way of the Indian army, while three had been secretaries of the Overseas Defence Committee. Of the twenty-one who had not begun as professional soldiers, seven came from the Home Civil Service (three from the Colonial Office itself and one each from the War Office, the Admiralty, the Treasury, and the Local Government Board. Two of these, incidentally, began in clerical not 'administrative' posts and one was a doctor). The Egyptian Civil Service supplied two, the Sudan Service and the Indian Civil Service one each, while two more were private secretaries to Dominion Governors-General. Another seven owed their connexion with the Empire to service

in South Africa either in the British South Africa Company service, or in the Boer war or the 'reconstruction' period that followed it. In this, as in other ways, this sample reflected the Colonial Service of the period of expansion and much of the history of the Colonial Empire from the eighteen-eighties to the first world war. Although only fifty-five of the 103 were graduates (27 Oxford, 18 Cambridge, 5 Edinburgh, 2 London, 2 Dublin, and 1 unidentified) the rise of the university man even before the first world war is plain. Of the fifty-three who were first appointed to the public service (including the army) before 1900, nineteen were graduates. Of the forty-four appointed between 1900 and 1915, thirty-three were.

The complaint that Governors were too often chosen from outside the service was still voiced and even in this period twelve of the 103 who held office during the inter-war years were men whose first appointment in the Colonial Service was that of Governor. Of these, eight had begun as professional soldiers, one was a Cabinet Minister (Sir Herbert Samuel), one a trade unionist who after eighteen years as a Member of Parliament was made Governor of Tasmania and later of the Falklands, one was a Treasury official, and one (Sir Edward Grigg) had begun his career on the editorial staff of *The Times*. Five of the twelve had been Members of Parliament before their appointment and four were appointed to very minor posts, two to the Seychelles, one to St Helena, and one to the Falklands. Three went to Kenya, which had no wholly 'Colonial Service' Governor throughout this period. (Sir Robert Coryndon, who came nearest to it, had begun with the British South Africa Company and been Rhodes's private secretary.) Four more of the twelve were High Commissioners in that other trouble spot, Palestine, which also had only one 'Colonial Service' man between the wars. It was, perhaps, only fitting that the Treasury official should have gone straight to one of the plums of the service, Malaya.

The consistent appointment in Kenya and Palestine of men from outside the Service must suggest that Ministers doubted its capacity to supply those broader qualities of statesmanship which the reconciliation of the sharply conflicting objects of British policy in these two countries evidently demanded. If the Service in these years produced neither a Lyautey nor a Lugard, it had in Cameron, Hugh Clifford, and Guggisberg three remarkable Governors who each demonstrated sharply their conviction of the paramountcy of native interests as they understood them, Cameron in his sustained opposition to a settler-dominated Closer Union in East Africa, Clifford by his repeated rejection of Leverhulme's demand for large-scale concessions in Nigeria, and Guggisberg by his insistent conviction of African potential. The majority maintained a high average of commonsense practicality in administration. But exceptional qualities were needed to survive wholly unimpaired the autocratic isolation which the system still imposed on Governors. If very few reacted to the point of eccentricity, not many were entirely immune from a certain rigidity which was only in part a legacy from the pioneer days before the war and the sturdy individualism they had so often demanded.

Government in the Colonial Empire was bureaucratic government. Society and economy were shaped most powerfully by other agencies, native and immigrant. But the limits within which those agencies worked, narrow to the point of suffocation or wide to the point of neglect, depended, to an extent which it is now hard to imagine, on the bureaucracy, the hard core of that world apart that made up the Colonial Empire. For that bureaucracy, of course, the limits of manœuvre were set by the brute economic and social facts as it saw them in each territory and also by its own attempt to work out for itself some rationale of its own activities. In comparatively few territories—Ceylon, Kenya, Malta, and some of the West Indies—they were also set by the interests which found expres-

sion in local political institutions. But limits were also set by Parliament and the cluster of institutions—Ministers, Parties, and pressure groups—which centred in it.

Generalizations about the role of Parliament in the formulation of colonial policy in the inter-war years are exceptionally hazardous. The detailed research on which they must be based has yet to be done, and can, in any case, only be doubtfully conclusive until the public archives are open. Many critics have emphasized Parliament's limitations as an effective supervisor of the bureaucratic trustee; they have done little more than echo—although sometimes with a different purpose—what John Stuart Mill said a hundred years ago:

‘To govern a country under responsibility to the people of *that* country, and to govern one country under responsibility to the people of another, are two very different things. What makes the excellence of the first is that freedom is preferable to despotism: but the last *is* despotism. The only choice the case admits, is a choice of despotisms: and it is not certain that the despotism of twenty millions is necessarily better than that of a few, or of one. But it is quite certain, that the despotism of those who neither hear, nor see, nor know anything about their subjects, has many chances of being worse than that of those who do. It is not usually thought that the immediate agents of authority govern better because they govern in the name of an absent master, and of one who has a thousand more pressing interests to attend to . . . The responsibility of the British rulers of India to the British nation is chiefly useful because, when any acts of the government are called in question, it ensures publicity and discussion . . . It is doubtless a useful restraint upon the immediate rulers that they can be put upon their defence, and that one or two of the jury will form an opinion worth having about their conduct, though that of the remainder will probably be several degrees worse than none. Such as it is, this is the amount of benefit to India, from the

control exercised over the Indian government by the British Parliament and people.’³⁵

Parliamentary intervention in the affairs of the Colonial Empire was limited, in the first place, for institutional reasons, rooted both in geography and history. It was rarely necessary for the Colonial Office to promote legislation in Parliament. Laws for the colonies were normally made separately by the legislators of each colony, even if, as in Gibraltar, the Governor was himself the legislature. Their constitutions were almost all laid down by executive instruments (Letters Patent or Orders in Council), for which no Parliamentary sanction was required. In all except five of them, the British government could legislate if need be by Order in Council. Their revenues were provided locally and their estimates required the Secretary of State’s approval not that of Parliament. Of course, all these matters could be discussed, if members wished and the Whips could find time, but that was quite different from the normal position of the Home Departments in which if the government wanted any new legislation it had to find Parliamentary time. The only occasion on which an opportunity necessarily occurred to raise any colonial issue was the annual debate in Committee of Supply on the Colonial Office vote. This very fact meant that the Colonial Secretary usually opened the debate with a broad, if conveniently selective, survey of his Department’s activities while others speakers each pursued the affairs of a particular territory in which they were interested. The occasion was accordingly ineffective for any sustained discussion of a major issue, or even for pressing home a minor one.

Secondly, Parliamentary intervention was limited not only because Parliament often had ‘a thousand more pressing interests to attend to’ but because not many members of either house had direct personal knowledge of, or interest in, the colonies. Both criticisms have perhaps been pressed too hard. Even if the attendance was small, a great deal of Parliamentary

time was taken up by those colonial issues on which there was strong disagreement, most of all those which sharply focused the latent oppositions between the protective and the developmental aspect of trusteeship, the interests of the natives and those of immigrant enterprise: no one who has worked through the debates and questions on Kenya and closer union in East Africa or on Palestine could be in any doubt of that. Nor was intervention on colonial issues limited, as has often been alleged, to a very small group. During Amery's tenure of the Colonial Office between 1924 and 1929 something like a third of the members raised some colonial issue in the House of Commons, even if only by asking a single question.³⁶ On the other hand, most of the talking during the same period about the predominant issue of East Africa was done by a much smaller group, varying slightly from session to session, but usually between fifteen and twenty strong and divided between what might be called the 'Development' lobby and the 'African rights' lobby. Nor did colonial affairs make a poor showing by that other barometer of Parliamentary concerns, question time. A substantial proportion of the 'more than five hundred questions' put down to the Colonial Secretary in 1924 were no doubt concerned with relations with the Dominions. But in the 1929-30 session, 471 were put down for oral answer—only part of the total—a number exceeded only by the 493 on India and the 1,199 on foreign affairs.³⁷

Parliament was not, however, well equipped to make effective use of the information available to it. In marked contrast to other colonial powers, the British published, either in the colonies or in London, an extraordinary amount of information about their activities. Commissions of inquiry were no doubt often a convenient device for shelving awkward decisions but their reports were usually substantial and informative. Annual Reports were sometimes amazingly revealing, sometimes discreetly obscure, often blandly complacent, but they

were published not only for each territory but for almost every department of government in each territory, and on the whole maintained an honourable standard of accuracy. But to make full use of all this material, to probe its understatements and pursue the clues it often provided to problems it was careful not to underline, Parliament needed more than the amateur efforts of a handful of private members. Lacking any such instrument as a Standing Colonial Committee, empowered to examine officials on the basis of material the Colonial Office was required to put before it, Parliament was not equipped to supervise colonial administration in areas whose problems were not dramatized by the evident conflict of rival interests.³⁸ Even if it had been, it must be doubtful how far it would have been concerned to stimulate what was most lacking: a sense of urgency sustained by adequate resources. Through all the East African debates in the 'twenties, for example, almost nothing is said of Uganda and not much more of Tanganyika. Satisfied that African rights were not in jeopardy, their most vocal watchdogs in Parliament seem to have felt that the problems of those territories could safely be left to time and the officials. Little said in Parliament foreshadowed the series of disturbances in the West Indies in the mid-thirties. More than anything else the shock these administered to British complacency brought about the more vigorous and constructive phase of trusteeship signaled by the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940, but delayed by the second world war until the end of colonial rule was almost in sight.

To assess the effectiveness of what Parliamentary intervention there was is more difficult. Except for the brief intervals of minority Labour government in 1924 and 1929 to 1931, Conservatives had an overall majority in every Parliament from 1919 to 1945. During most of the 'twenties the opposition was hopelessly divided between Labour and Liberals, while from

1931 to 1935 it was all but eliminated. Few policies actually put into effect throughout the inter-war years can therefore have been seriously unacceptable to most Conservatives.

In colonial affairs, the party's major preoccupation was economic development. The priorities as it saw them were clear: transport, especially railways, agricultural research to develop new crops and increase the yields of those already established, medical and educational advance as the means to increase the economic potential of native populations. If the emphasis was usually on European enterprise as the agency of development, this was also seen as the most effective method of raising the standard of the native peoples. Colonial development thus fell naturally into place in the wider aim of Empire Development, Empire Settlement, and greater Empire self-sufficiency to be brought about by Imperial Preference. But if for the more ardent proponents of this policy the strengthening of Empire was a deeply felt and indeed central objective, they remained a minority in the party and still more among its leadership. For a much larger group, the Empire served rather the function for which some of their successors have recently seemed to cast Europe: a natural solution to the long-term problems of the British economy. The General Election of 1923 convinced Baldwin that a General Tariff, the essential prerequisite of substantial Imperial Preference, was still a doubtful political asset in Britain and when at last Imperial Preference came in 1932 it was as a measure of economic first aid rather than the expression of any national conversion to the full-blooded doctrines of imperial self-sufficiency. It was indeed Amery's unyielding convictions on that issue which did most to limit his political influence and prevented his return to the Colonial Office in 1931.³⁹ Cunliffe Lister, who, after Amery, had the biggest impact and the longest term at the Colonial Office, was a convinced protectionist but of a more pragmatic cast of mind than Amery. On one occasion indeed he went

so far as to tell the House 'my view of Imperial policy is that I want to get as much trade as I can'.⁴⁰

The most vocal exponents in Parliament of economic development as the real issue in colonial policy were a small group of backbenchers led by Page Croft, secretary of the Empire Industries Association which Amery, Neville Chamberlain, and Lord Lloyd had founded in 1923 and which boasted 200 members in Parliament in 1930. But if the members of this group were strong supporters of the settler cause in Kenya and of European enterprise in general, British economic activities in the Colonial Empire as a whole were too diverse for the shriller insistence on European interests entirely to prevail even among Conservatives. They were the activities of traders more than planters, of planters more than manufacturers, with the outstanding exception of Manchester cotton, and of all of these more than of settlers, though the latter found vocal support through their close personal connexions in the Parliamentary party. Mining which, in conditions favourable to settlement, as in Rhodesia, strongly reinforces settler interests, was elsewhere important only in tropical territories like Malaya where it resembled rather a plantation than a settler structure. For traders, native production and native markets were often more important than European. In East Africa the Manchester cotton industry, through the Empire Cotton Growing Corporation which it largely financed, had indeed a major interest; but, paradoxically, it was Africans who grew the cotton and Indians, Manchester's growing competitors, who before long bought most of it.

Such diverse interests in colonial development found regular expression in Parliament though it was usually confined to specific points and involved a far larger number of members than the few but more continuously active supporters of the settlers in East and Central Africa. The spokesmen of these more diverse interests shaded into that body of opinion, not

unrepresented in any party, which was less sure of the absolute necessity of European enterprise. It was, for instance, Sir Humphrey Leggett, the Chairman of the East African Section of the London Chamber of Commerce and of the British East Africa Corporation, a man with more than twenty years' experience in East Africa, and Lugard's 'close friend and ally' as Miss Perham calls him, who told the Joint Select Committee on Closer Union in East Africa in 1930 that 'Colonist' development in East Africa was 'more likely than not to result in failure',⁴¹ that it was very likely to hinder plantation development as well as native development and that neither were essential to native development, citing African progress in Uganda and Tanganyika in support of these opinions.

Nor were Conservatives blind to the limitations of government loans and private investment as the sole sources of development finance to supplement colonial revenues. Milner demanded an Imperial Development Fund so that 'the poorer Colonies, which have no credit' might get the help of which they were the most in need.⁴² Amery tried unsuccessfully to divert half of the £1 million a year that Malaya offered the navy in 1921 to a Colonial Development Fund to help the 'weaker brethren'.⁴³ When the British government declined to provide the new preferences it had promised at the Imperial Economic Conference in 1923 the £1 million which it was calculated they would have cost was made available to finance an Empire Marketing Board, freed from detailed Treasury control. As its chairman, Amery showed what could be done by using some of its funds to finance agricultural and scientific work in the Colonial Empire.⁴⁴ Although the party leaders declined to accept its conversion into a larger Empire Marketing and Development Fund their programme for the 1929 election included a Colonial Development Fund.⁴⁵

But it was the Labour Party which won the election and produced the first Colonial Development Act, providing up

to £1 million a year. Presented as part of an emergency plan to reduce British unemployment the Bill passed through all stages in one week and without a division. The sum was small, and the purposes for which it could be spent limited to aiding and developing agriculture and industry in the Colonial Empire and 'thereby promoting British industry'. When he introduced the 1940 Act, the Secretary of State, Malcolm MacDonald, claimed that the primary purpose of the earlier Act was 'not to help colonial development . . . but . . . to solve our own unemployment problem'.⁴⁶ This had been repeated by many authorities since but is not wholly justified: speakers in the 1929 debates were in fact preoccupied with colonial problems and many sought assurances that the Act would be interpreted widely and that larger sums would be found if they were needed. Amery promised full Conservative support and questioned the wisdom of a Development Committee composed entirely of business men on which the Labour government rather eccentrically insisted.

The Labour Party on the other hand was, of course, the heir to the humanitarian tradition, not only, as it were, by direct descent but also by its absorption of many of the radicals, as the fortunes of the Liberal Party declined. But particularly in the first years after the war some of its left wing and especially the Independent Labour Party, heirs rather of Hobson and the Little Englanders than of Lenin, were prone to adopt the attitude that Socialists could keep their hands clean only by an early, if not an immediate, liquidation of Empire, a point of view which shaded into the recurrent propaganda for an internationalization of colonial responsibilities under the League of Nations or, more practically, an extension of the Mandate system to all colonies. In *Labour and the Nation* (1928) these three approaches settled into a firm enunciation of the protective aspect of trusteeship, a more guarded aspiration towards the progressive development of self-government, and a

rather ambiguous reference to the extension of the Mandate system.

‘The Labour Party views with grave concern the appalling evils produced by capitalist exploitation in certain of the tropical and sub-tropical parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations. It holds that the welfare of indigenous races, their economic prosperity, and their advancement in culture and civilization, must be the primary object of colonial administration, to which all other interests must be rigorously subordinated. It notes with satisfaction that, where that principle has been observed, primitive peoples have achieved, in a comparatively short time, results which decisively disprove the statement that they are incapable of social progress. . . .

‘A Labour Government, therefore, will make no compromise with policies which aim at accelerating the economic development of backward areas by methods which undermine the independence, the social institutions and the *morale* of their inhabitants, and which thus are injurious both to them, and, ultimately, to the working classes of Europe. It will use every means in its power to protect them in the occupation and enjoyment of their land, to prevent absolutely forced labour whatever form it may assume, and to ensure that contracts between native workers and European employers are entered upon voluntarily and not under duress, that such contracts are subject to the approval of a public authority . . . It will encourage the development of the services concerned with health and education. Its policy will be based upon the firm conviction that all the dependencies of the Crown ought, as soon as possible, to become self-governing States. It will take steps, therefore, to transfer to the inhabitants of these countries, without distinction of race or colour, such measure of political responsibility as they are capable of exercising while imperial responsibility for their government will be maintained during the period preceding the establishment of democratic institutions. . . . It

will co-operate cordially with the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, and will make every effort to strengthen and extend its authority.'⁴⁷

The next pronouncement of Labour Party policy, made in 1933, insisted in greater detail on the dangers not only of the 'Capitalist Policy' of development but even of what it called the 'African policy'. The latter might, for example, lead to 'the establishment of a system of individual Native landlordism, which is as bad as white landlordism'. 'Socialisation and self-government' were defiantly asserted to be the 'immediate objectives' but colonies differ widely and 'any attempt to treat them in a uniform way'⁴⁸ in respect of either would be disastrous.

Until the later thirties the most vocal Labour spokesmen on colonial issues in Parliament belonged to a small group of about fifteen, including some Liberals, who were almost all closely connected with the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, an ancient but small non-party body. They did not oppose development but they distrusted its direction. Government revenue and loans were spent far too much, if not exclusively, to the advantage of settlers or European enterprise and large development projects, unless carefully controlled, would lead to forced labour, or the seizure of native land. Lord Olivier, one of the original Fabians, a former Colonial Office man and Governor of Jamaica, a representative member of this group, indeed elicited the weighty support of Lord Lugard, a Conservative so far as he had party affiliations, for the proposition that 'development if pushed forward too rapidly, is pernicious'. It was, many of this small but well-informed group felt, 'because of this idea that these regions must be developed as quickly as possible that we encounter all these tendencies towards forced labour and the doctrine that it is the duty of the native to work'.⁴⁹ But their influence in the Labour Party, though considerable, can be exaggerated. It was not from their ranks that Labour found its colonial ministers in

1924 or 1929, nor was their outlook represented by the report in which the Trade Union Congress, largely inspired by Bevin, recommended in 1930 'as full a development as possible of the economic relations between the constituent parts of the British Commonwealth'. Bevin indeed was the only member of the party the Labour government appointed to the Development Committee set up under the 1929 Act. The 'Native Rights' lobby, at least until the later 'thirties, depended for its not inconsiderable influence not so much on party support—no votes were likely to be won or lost on the issues it took up—but rather on its non-party character, its connexions with the churches and the missionary societies, and with sympathetic ex-officials, which enabled it to mobilize a substantial part of what is nowadays called the Establishment. In her life of Lugard, Margery Perham gives a classical account of how a pressure group of this kind operated in the campaign against settler control of Kenya and the Closer Union issue.⁵⁰

When ten years later in 1943 the Labour Party issued a statement of its post-war aims in the colonies it was in fact confined to Africa and the Pacific.⁵¹ 'For a considerable time to come these peoples', it affirmed, 'will not be ready for self-government, and European peoples and States must be responsible for the administration of their territories.' They must, of course, be regarded 'as a trust for the native inhabitants' and a primary object 'should always be to train the native inhabitants in every possible way so that they may be able in the shortest possible time to govern themselves'. But much more attention was given to proposals for specific improvements in education, health, labour supervision, producers' co-operatives, the elimination of racial discrimination except when designed to protect the natives in the ownership of land, and for economic development based on long-term government plans. These would require capital from outside sources, both by way of loans and free grants for which the 1940 Colonial

Development and Welfare Act already provided but the scale of the resources needed was emphasized. To supervise the administration of all colonies the party now called for an International Authority with equal representation of administering and non-administering powers, visiting missions, and the enforcement of a revised mandate code, including the Open Door in all colonies, i.e. the abolition of Imperial Preference, though exceptions might be permitted where the Permanent Court of International Justice (of all bodies!) was satisfied they were in the colony's interest.

Although this continued preoccupation with international supervision found no echo among Conservatives, the two parties had in fact moved much closer together. 'Vigorous State action to promote colonial development and welfare' had become 'the new orthodoxy'.⁵² If Labour also accepted that in many territories the over-riding responsibility of the trustee would be needed 'for a considerable time to come' the Conservative Colonial Secretary in Churchill's wartime administration, Oliver Stanley, told Parliament that same year 'it is up to us . . . to ensure that as quickly as possible people are trained and equipped for eventual self-government'.⁵³ But time had not stood still while Britain had so laboriously worked out something of what trusteeship really meant. Now that she was at last ready for the task, the unchallenged authority of the inter-war years was no longer hers to command in most of the Colonial Empire.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹ J. E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (London, 1960), p. 275.

² Sir R. Furse, *Aucuparius: Recollections of a Recruiting Officer* (London, 1962), p. 26.

³ Sir D. Cameron, *op. cit.*, p. 255.

⁴ For the criticism, see Lugard, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-91, Cameron, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-63, and, among later critics, two distinguished colonial administrators both of whom had also served in the Office, Sir Alan Burns, *Colonial Civil Servant* (London, 1949), pp. 155-76, and E. W. Evans, *The British Yoke* (London, 1949), pp. 75-76 and 112-16.

⁵ For the division of the Office in 1907, see Lord Elgin's despatch of 21 September 1907 (Cmd. 3795), and J. A. Cross, 'Whitehall and the Commonwealth', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1964), forthcoming. Business relating to the three High Commission Territories in South Africa and to Fiji and the Western Pacific remained with the Dominions division 'because of their proximity to autonomous communities'. See R. B. Pugh, 'The Colonial Office' in *Cambridge History of the British Empire*, Vol. III (Cambridge, 1959). Sir Cosmo Parkinson, *The Colonial Office from Within* (London, 1947), pp. 47-51, gives some account of the development of this early medical and scientific work.

⁶ Commons *Hansard*, 30 July 1919, c. 2174.

⁷ Milner, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁸ Sir S. Caine, 'Colonial Development: A British Contribution to World Progress', *Progress*, Vol. 47 (1957), p. 80, from which the figures are taken, except those which relate to Iraq and the 1929 colonial budgets which are mine.

⁹ *Report of a Committee on Research in the Colonies* (Cmd. 1472), 1921, p. 10.

¹⁰ Amery, *op. cit.*, p. 336. Pugh, *op. cit.*, p. 759.

¹¹ Sir James (later Lord) Stevenson, formerly of John Walker and Sons, the distillers.

¹² For the setting up of the Education Committee see R. Oliver, *The Missionary Factor in East Africa* (London, 1952), pp. 263-71, and M. Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority* (London, 1960) pp. 657-61. For Vischer, see Sonia Graham's unpublished London Ph.D. thesis, 'A History of Education in relation to the development of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria 1900-1919, with special reference to the work of Hanns Vischer'.

¹³ The Fisheries Adviser was financed from the funds of the 'Discovery' Committee (which administered a research programme in the Antarctic with funds derived from the whaling industry), while the Agricultural and Animal Health posts received some assistance from the Empire Marketing Board (see below, p. 55).

¹⁴ Besides those mentioned above (p. 31) the Research Committee appointed in 1919 maintained an increasingly shadowy existence until the early 'thirties. In association with the U.K. Medical Research Council, a Colonial Medical Research Committee was set up in 1927, taking over the management of the Tropical Diseases Fund (£2,000 per annum from 'Dominion and Colonial governments'). An Overseas Mechanical Transport Council was set up in 1928, half its cost being met by colonial governments and the rest by the Empire Marketing Board. After 1929 there was a lull in such developments, until the later 'thirties when the Colonial Forest Resources Development Department

(1935) and the Colonial Empire Marketing Board (1937) mark the beginnings of a new series, parallel to the enlarged conception of the role of government in colonial development.

¹⁵ Burns, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-6.

¹⁶ A good example is the development of the International Labour Conventions during the inter-war years, which could evidently not be dealt with at all conveniently on a 'geographical basis' and were handled by the General Department until hived off into the Social Services Department set up in 1938. (*Labour Supervision in the Colonial Empire 1937-1943* (Colonial No. 185, 1943), paras. 46-53, illustrates this development.)

¹⁷ Earl of Swinton, *I Remember* (1948), pp. 65-68.

¹⁸ Sir Cosmo Parkinson (1938-40; 1940-2). Lugard's assertion that between 1825 and 1921 'the post of permanent Under-Secretary has only been held for an aggregate of eighteen years by promotion from the office itself' (*op. cit.*, p. 157) is untrue however it is interpreted. Stephen (1836-47), Herbert (1871-92), Meade (1892-7), Wingfield (1897-1900), Anderson (1911-15), and Fiddes (1916-21) had all previously served in the Office although Herbert was an Assistant Under-Secretary only for one year, and Anderson had been away as Governor of the Straits Settlements for the period immediately preceding his term as P.U.S. Ommaney (1900-7) had been a Crown Agent since 1877, so he can hardly be regarded as an outsider, in the sense in which Merivale, Rogers, Hopwood, and even Herbert were.

¹⁹ Amery, *op. cit.*, pp. 336-7.

²⁰ Colonial Office Conference 1927, *Summary of Proceedings* (Cmd. 2883), and Appendices (Cmd. 2884); Colonial Office Conference 1930, *Summary of Proceedings* (Cmd. 3628), Appendices (Cmd. 3629).

²¹ *Report of a Committee on the System of Appointment in the Colonial Office and the Colonial Services* (Cmd. 3554), p. 40.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³ I have drawn heavily on Furse's own account in *Aucuparius: Recollections of a Recruiting Officer*, and on Sir C. Jeffries, *The Colonial Empire and Its Civil Service* (Cambridge, 1938). Since these lectures were given, an American scholar, R. Heussler, has published in *Yesterday's Rulers* (Oxford, 1963) an interesting assessment of the recruitment and training of colonial administrators since 1919. He emphasizes the 'elitist' presuppositions implicit in the selection criteria of the administrative service, which were strongly criticized in a contemporary Fabian Society report, *Downing Street and the Colonies* (London, 1942). His book is not, however, always reliable on detailed matters of fact.

²⁴ Recruitment for Ceylon was suspended between 1931 and 1935. In 1935-7 one-third of the vacancies were filled by Europeans selected in London. After 1937 no further European appointments were made. Sir C. Collins, *Public Administration in Ceylon* (London, 1951), p. 102.

²⁵ See, e.g. *Report of the Committee on the Staffing of the Agricultural Departments in the Colonies* (Cmd. 730), 1920; *Report of the Departmental Committee on*

Colonial Medical Services (Cmd. 939), 1920; *Agricultural Research and Administration in the Non-Self-Governing Dependencies* (Cmd. 2885), 1927; *Report of Committee on Colonial Scientific and Research Services* (included in Cmd. 2883), 1927; *Colonial Agricultural Service* (Cmd. 3049), 1928; *Colonial Veterinary Service* (Cmd. 3261), 1929.

²⁶ Furse, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-2.

²⁷ *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Forestry Education* (Cmd. 1166), 1921; Furse, *op. cit.*, p. 77. *The Training of Candidates and Probationers for Appointment as Forest Officers in the Government Service* (Colonial No. 61), 1931, pp. 35-40. By then its income was £5,000 from colonial governments, £2,000 from the British government plus £2,200 for specific projects.

²⁸ Amery, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

²⁹ Professor (later Sir) Percy Nunn, Principal of the College, was a member of the Advisory Committee.

³⁰ *Post-War Training for the Colonial Service* (Colonial No. 198), 1946, p. 22.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 53. Cf. the Office memorandum for the Colonial Office Conference 1930: 'Clearly no obstacle must be created against the employment of locally domiciled persons in the service of their own country, and their promotion in that service. The Committee's proposals do not create any such obstacle.' Cmd. 3629, p. 161.

³² Collins, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-102. Sir Cecil Clementi increased the number of Malays appointed to the Malay Civil Service for duty in the F.M.S., and also established a Straits Settlements Civil Service to provide some openings in that Colony.

³³ D. Kimble, *A Political History of Ghana 1850-1928* (Oxford, 1963), p. 122.

³⁴ *Organisation of the Colonial Service* (Colonial No. 197), 1946, p. 5.

³⁵ *Considerations on Representative Government* (World's Classics Edition), pp. 410-16.

³⁶ I am indebted to my colleague Mr E. A. Brett for the information that during the Conservative administration of 1924 to 1929 no less than 170 members of the House of Commons made some contribution on East African or general colonial policy, even if only by asking a single question.

³⁷ R. W. McCulloch, 'Question Time in the British House of Commons', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 27 (1933), pp. 971-7.

³⁸ There were weighty arguments against any such Committee, especially that it raised 'issues of Parliamentary procedure and constitutional practice of a far reaching character' (Mr Chamberlain, *Commons Hansard*, 2 August 1939, c. 2369). See also Lord Hailey, *An African Survey* (London, 1938), pp. xxvii-xxviii, for a characteristically terse discussion of the issue.

³⁹ Amery, *op. cit.*, p. 511.

⁴⁰ *Commons Hansard*, 1 July 1932, c. 2211.

⁴¹ Perham, *op. cit.*, p. 687. *Joint Committee on Closer Union in East Africa Vol. III Appendices* (H. of C. No. 156), 1931, pp. 45-46.

⁴² Milner, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁴³ Amery, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 346 f. See also *Empire Marketing Board: Note on the Work and Finance of the Board* (Cmd. 4121), 1932.

⁴⁵ *The Times*, 19 April 1929.

⁴⁶ Commons Hansard, 21 May 1940, c. 45.

⁴⁷ *Labour and the Nation* (1928), p. 44.

⁴⁸ *The Colonial Empire* (1933), p. 4.

⁴⁹ *The Anti Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend*, Series V, Vol. 18, p. 64.

⁵⁰ Perham, *op. cit.*, pp. 673-91.

⁵¹ *The Colonies: The Labour Party's Post-War Policy for the African and Pacific Colonies* (1943), p. 2.

⁵² Sir W. K. Hancock, *Wealth of Colonies* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 45.

⁵³ Commons Hansard, 13 July 1943, c. 49.

III

THE DILEMMAS OF TRUSTEESHIP

The government of dependencies 'whose population' was not 'in a sufficiently advanced state to be fitted for representative government' and which 'if held at all, must be governed by the dominant country, or by persons delegated for that purpose by it' was, Mill asserted, 'as legitimate as any other, if it is the one which in the existing state of civilization of the subject people, most facilitates their transition to a higher stage of improvement'.¹ For such government the ideal form was that of an enlightened bureaucratic despotism. 'We need not expect', Mill continued, 'to see that ideal realized; but unless some approach to it is, the rulers are guilty of a dereliction of the highest moral trust which can devolve upon a nation: and if they do not even aim at it, they are selfish usurpers'. In this Mill echoed Burke: 'all political power which is set over men . . . ought to be *some way or other* exercised for their benefit'. The realistic moderation with which these great men expressed the idea of trusteeship has been less remarked than the idea itself.

Nor were their arguments directed to justifying the seizure of power in territories hitherto free. It was the expansion of European, and the emergence of American, imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century which focused attention once again on that more intractable issue, in an era when, even in the jungle of sovereign states, naked force was still felt to need some justification. 'It is difficult for the strongest advocate of national rights to assert that the people in actual occupation or political control over a given area of the earth are entitled to do

what they will with "their own", entirely disregarding the direct and indirect consequences of their actions upon the rest of the world. . . . There is nothing unworthy, quite the contrary, in the notion that nations which, through a more stimulative environment, have advanced further in certain arts of industry, politics, or morals, should communicate these to nations which from their circumstances were more backward, so as to aid them in developing alike the material resources of their land and the spiritual qualities of their people. Nor is it clear that in this work some . . . "compulsion" is wholly illegitimate. Force is itself no remedy, coercion is not education, but it may be a prior condition to the operation of educative forces . . . it follows that civilized Governments *may* undertake the political and economic control of lower races . . . What, then, are the conditions which render it legitimate? They may be provisionally stated thus: Such interference . . . must be directed primarily to secure the safety and progress of the civilization of the world, and not the special interest of the interfering nation. Such interference must be attended by an improvement and elevation of the character of the people who are brought under this control. Lastly, the determination of the two preceding conditions must not be left to the arbitrary will or judgment of the interfering nation, but must proceed from some organized representation of civilized humanity.²

J. A. Hobson, from whose famous (but, I suspect, little read) book *Imperialism* I have been quoting, did not, you will notice, contend that to be legitimate Imperial rule must benefit the 'lower races' alone or even that the advantages they secured from it must be the maximum possible but merely that their condition must be improved. But he added another condition which, on the face of it, has nothing to do with their advantage. This too is stated with studied moderation. Imperial rule is also to be directed 'primarily to secure the safety and the progress of . . . the world, and not the special interest of' the imperial

power. It is not argued that this condition is necessary for the benefit of the subject people but as a rule for international policy. Hobson certainly did not 'expect to see' these ideals realized, or even approached. 'The true conditions for the exercise of such a "trust"' were, he wrote, 'entirely lacking'.³ His opinion was, of course, that the contemporary development of the advanced capitalist countries at the beginning of this century was such as entirely to preclude the possibility of colonial trusteeship.

Twenty years later Lugard restated in the *Dual Mandate* what had long been the official defence of British Imperialism. 'The tropics are the heritage of mankind, and neither, on the one hand, has the suzerain Power a right to their exclusive exploitation, nor, on the other hand, have the races which inhabit them a right to deny their bounties to those who need them. . . . The policy of the "open door", has two distinct though mutually dependent aspects—viz., equal opportunity to the commerce of other countries, and an unrestricted market to the native producer. The tropics can only be successfully developed if the interests of the controlling Power are identical with those of the natives of the country, and it seeks no individual advantage, and imposes no restriction for its own benefit.'⁴ Like other Imperialists, Lugard believed passionately in his ideal and saw no reason why it should not, by and large, be realized. But the proclamation of the Dual Mandate received its classical expression, like many another doctrine of social and economic policy, just when the conditions which had made it seem plausible were beginning to disappear. Was the doctrine of trusteeship necessarily dependent on the conception of a self-regulating harmonization of interests which the classical theory of free competition assumed? It was one thing to claim that the Open Door was, as Hobson had implied, the necessary condition of international acquiescence in the powers that imperial states claimed for themselves over large areas of the world. It was surely quite another to claim that it was a

sufficient condition that native interests would not be exploited. Open competition by traders of all nations would, the argument went, assure the colonial producers fair prices for their exports and equally assure colonial consumers fair prices for their imports. But what if colonial conditions were such that competition was more than usually imperfect? Both issues were sharply raised by the course of events in the inter-war years as we shall see. But let us for the moment put them on one side.

Was it not unlikely that, taking the sphere of colonial government as a whole, the interests of the colonial power should be *identical* with those of the natives? Trusteeship suffered greatly from the overstatement of self-justification. The aggregates with which it worked were sums which could not, in fact, be added up. Even in the strictly economic sphere, the techniques which might make it possible to calculate the share of national product that accrued to natives and non-natives, to residents in a colony and non-residents, had not yet been invented and, if they had been, sketchy colonial administrations had hardly begun, even at the end of the second war, to produce the data needed for such calculations.

How, again, could a balance be struck between the social changes that any economic development must bring and native satisfactions within their own social order? The ideas of Lugard and his followers brought this problem into much greater prominence just at a time when the easy assumption of the obvious superiority of Western civilization was sharply shaken by the first war, and the increasingly evident incapacity of the Western economic system to solve the problem of unemployment. They were soon reinforced by the much greater knowledge which anthropologists and administrators began to make available of the complex purposes which native social organization served. A large new area of uncertainty was thus added to the problem.

Let me illustrate this. Hobson had considered that 'the true "imperial" policy' was 'best illustrated' by Basutoland which had been rescued from the industrial exploiters, where the old political and economic institutions were preserved, the British authorities interfering as little as possible with native ways. Europeans were not allowed to hold land or to prospect for minerals and needed a licence even to open a store.⁵ In 1935 a Commissioner sent out by the British government reported⁶—I quote Sir Keith Hancock's summary of his findings—that 'Economically there was a great deal to hope for from the agricultural and pastoral resources of the country and the intelligence of its people. But the resources had been squandered, and the intelligence left without guidance. The administration had done nothing effective to check erosion, which was occurring on a scale that threatened "the whole fabric of the soil". It had done nothing to check stock theft, which was occurring on a scale that threatened to undermine both the moral integrity and the economic productivity of the Basuto people. It had not even been effective in collecting the taxes that were its due. Basutoland suffered from a lack of governance which was sometimes dignified with the title of "indirect rule". Never since the British government first took to itself responsibility for Basutoland, Sir Alan Pim said, had it given the country rule of any sort, direct or indirect. Indirect rule meant the incorporation of Native institutions into a single system of government, under the "continuous guidance, supervision, and stimulus of European officers". It regarded Native institutions, not as an end, but as a means towards the development and welfare of the Native people to whom the institutions belonged. But in Basutoland the Chiefs of the family of Moshesh had been allowed to go their own irresponsible and increasingly prodigal way; there were two parallel sets of institutions in the country, and both of them were futile.' Sir Alan Pim also reported that more than 50 per cent of the adult male Basutos were at any

one time normally absent, working on the farms and mines of the Union of South Africa, a figure, he pointed out, 'in striking contrast to the estimate made by the Belgian Congo Committee of 1924-5' in whose opinion 'not more than five per cent. could be absent for long periods, and an additional five per cent. within two days' journey, without definitely harmful effects'⁷ to tribal life. Part of the remedy he proposed was that Basutoland should adopt the Nigerian system of native administration with its closer European control of native institutions and attempt to adapt them to the new needs of economic and social development as opposed to the almost complete absence of 'interference' with native society which Hobson had esteemed the ideal.

But in the home of the native administration system, in Nigeria itself, in areas where export crops were produced by African small-holders, a new problem was already posing the question of what was to be done to adapt Native Authorities to the needs of a society in which, as in Western Nigeria, economic growth had already by the mid-thirties produced in fair number new classes unknown to traditional society, cocoa brokers, traders, lorry and bus operators, farmers employing labour, school teachers, and was resulting in growing urban areas in which the coexistence of many different ethnic groups made the maintenance or extension of traditional native authority doubtfully effective. How far, in short, even in the most favourable circumstances, where large-scale European plantations or mines, let alone European settlement, did not exist, was it possible or desirable to try to maintain or adapt the native social system? What, in such circumstances, were 'native' interests and how, even if they could be ascertained, could they be reconciled with 'European' interests in the maintenance of law and order and the provision of social services especially those all-important but unpopular public health measures so vital to continued European activity as well as to the natives

themselves. Nor, of course, was this a specifically African problem: it was indeed more sharply posed in Malaya where so many of the new forces were expressed in the activities of Chinese and Indian immigrants, the legacy of an earlier age which could not simply be expunged, and where the attempt to maintain the authority of the Sultans ran up against the paramount pressure for a greater degree of administrative unity which the development of the economy increasingly demanded.⁸

But if, even as formulated in the more extended version of the Dual Mandate, the principle of trusteeship thus did not provide any unambiguous answer to the actual problems of colonial government either in the economic or the wider social sphere, neither did it provide very specific guidance in the sphere of politics. It emphasized, to use Amery's words in his speech to the Colonial Office Conference in 1927, that 'the ultimate responsibility for the general governance of' the affairs of the Colonial Empire 'must, at any rate for any future that we need take into consideration here'⁹ rest with the British government. This followed, conveniently enough, from the Dual Mandate itself: the responsibilities which the trustee had felt justified in assuming in the joint interests of the world and the colonial peoples evidently could not, on that basis, be laid aside, until the ward could reasonably be regarded as equipped to discharge them himself. But moreover, certain further deductions could be drawn. They have been most clearly formulated by John Plamenatz.¹⁰ Fitness for self-government might be held to imply, first the ability to give modern trade and industry the security they need, second the ability to afford security of person and good government by the standards of western Europe, and third the ability to produce native rulers strong enough and responsible enough to respect international law. Mr Plamenatz points out that the first and third of these conditions require a strong government while the second requires in the broad sense constitutional government, not democracy

or parliamentary government, but a government which respects the rules governing the exercise of power and where there is an independent judiciary with high professional standards. On the doctrine that the British were trustees for world interests, it could be inferred that their responsibilities could properly be handed over only if a native government had been brought into existence capable of satisfying at least the first condition, probably also the third, but conceivably the second as well.

A quite different criterion of that fitness for self-government which would justify the trustee in handing over to the ward could, however, be deduced from the second half of the Dual Mandate, the doctrine that the British were also trustees for the welfare of the native races. This might be defined as 'the ability to work the institutions that make democracy and freedom effective'.¹¹ The Labour Party was using this line of argument when—no doubt with the Kenya settlers' claims in mind—it said in its 1928 policy statement that 'imperial responsibility . . . will be maintained during the period preceding the establishment of democratic institutions'.¹² But though it was possible, it was evidently not necessary to take the view that democracy was the only form of government to which a proper regard for the welfare of the colonial peoples would allow the trustee to relinquish his responsibilities. In the political sphere, as in the economic and social spheres, the principle of trusteeship thus provided no unambiguous answer, still less did it help to prescribe the all-important intermediate steps.

Such light as, even in its Dual Mandate model, the torch of trusteeship could be made to yield thus seemed to illumine far more clearly one or two paths *not* to be followed rather than any definite road forward through the still largely unknown, extraordinarily varied and usually deceptive country which the application of Western technology, in however modest a form, the growth of the market, and research in the natural and social

sciences, were just beginning to disclose in the Colonial Empire. The more thoroughgoing advocates of the principle of trusteeship would never have allowed that it is only in a revolutionary phase, and then rather briefly, that general principles are at all seen as susceptible of complete and direct application in politics. In a well-established order, on the other hand, politics are understood, though not always admitted, to call, in a necessarily imperfect world, for 'the endless composition of claims in conflict'.¹³ Such an evolution in outlook was reflected in the colonial policy of the Labour Party though not always in the views of its more thoroughgoing socialist supporters. Its first detailed pronouncement on African policy, in 1926, after remarking that 'Labour has hitherto naturally given little detailed attention to the Empire', continued 'the time may be not far distant when Labour will be called upon to assume responsibility for the government of the country',¹⁴ a consideration which could be seen already at work in the party's increasingly cautious approach to self-government, which lasted until the end of the second world war.

Again, if brought to bear at all, the principle of trusteeship, like any other, had to be brought to bear in each territory on an historically determined situation, in which the actions of the past, however reprehensible the principles then at work, had created responsibilities which could not simply be liquidated. Many a harassed Colonial Secretary might have agreed that it would have been more convenient, as well as possibly more virtuous, if Indian or Chinese labour had never been brought to territories like Malaya, Fiji, Trinidad, or British Guiana, or if European settlement had not been officially encouraged in Kenya in 1903 or in Palestine after the first world war, or if Britain had not in Ceylon or Cyprus found herself in control of territories where, in a far more remote past, earlier colonizations had produced sizeable minorities, like the Ceylon Tamils or the Cypriot Turks, wholly distinct in language and culture

from the majority of people. But, confronted with such situations, had not the imperial power responsibilities, not merely to the majority, or to those who could claim to be the indigenous people, but to *all* the inhabitants? This line of thought, as natural to the rulers of an old-established multi-national state as it has seemed to their critics inevitable in an Imperialist policy of 'divide and rule', appears again and again in their pronouncements of policy. It was the basis of the restatement of trusteeship implicit in the Report of the Joint Select Committee on Closer Union in East Africa. The famous declaration of 1923 that in Kenya 'the interests of the African natives must be paramount, and if and when those interests and the interests of the immigrant races should conflict, the former should prevail', meant, said the Joint Select Committee, 'no more than that the interests of the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population should not be subordinated to those of a minority belonging to another race, however important in itself'.¹⁵ Similarly, in 1938, Malcolm MacDonald, then Colonial Secretary, rejected an opposition motion that the primary purpose of colonial policy should be the welfare and progress of the native inhabitants, claiming that it was, on the contrary, the welfare and progress of *all* the inhabitants, though, he went on, 'our first duty' was 'always' to the native inhabitants.¹⁶

If the principle of trusteeship was thus reduced to the exceedingly modest aim that imperial power must be, in Burke's words, '*some way or other* exercised for the benefit' of the colonial peoples, it has also to be recognized that, such as it was, it could in any event operate only within the fairly narrow, if fluctuating, limits defined by the strategic preoccupations of British statesmen, the economic pressures to which they responded, and the reluctance to surrender power from which they were by no means exempt, even if temperament and experience combined to give them a flexibility not often displayed by imperial rulers. Egypt, though it was never a colony and its

independence had been unilaterally declared by Britain in 1922, most strikingly displays the distortion of trusteeship by defence, but Malta, Gibraltar, and Cyprus all illustrated how changing conceptions of strategic needs set limits for colonial policy makers.

It is essential to underline the limits which were set to any simple application of trusteeship by the facts of history, the imperatives of defence, and the more insidious pressures of British economic interest. It is only common sense to admit not only the ambiguities inherent in the idea of trusteeship itself, but also the uncertainties imposed by the likelihood of mistakes in estimating the consequences of policy which was certainly greater in the Colonial Empire than in more developed countries. But it is also necessary to allow that there was an area of decision in colonial policy in which the demands of trusteeship, if by no means always conceded, yet significantly affected the outcome. The greatest disservice which the too complacent reiteration of the professions of trusteeship has done to a true estimation of the late phase of British imperial rule is to have strengthened the counter myth which denies it any place at all.

It may now be more profitable to look a little more closely at some of the economic, social, and political dilemmas to which ambiguities, as well as conflicts of purpose and the limits of manoeuvre, condemned the makers of colonial policy during the inter-war years. A brief glance at the end of the Open Door should begin by noticing that in the West Indies, Fiji, Cyprus, and Mauritius, Imperial Preference long preceded the Ottawa Conference of 1932, while in East Africa and in Nigeria and the Gold Coast it was never adopted apart from the quota regulation of textiles introduced in the two West African territories, as elsewhere, in 1936 against the Japanese. The major change in 1932 was the extension of Imperial Preference to Hong Kong, Ceylon, and Malaya. In

the classical theory of trusteeship, we have seen, the Open Door fulfilled a double function: it ensured, it was claimed, the acquiescence of the rest of the world in British control of so large a part of the tropics and simultaneously ensured that the colonial peoples received fair treatment in world trade. Much attention was focused on the former issue in the 'thirties but, to those not committed to opposition to Imperial Preference on other grounds, its exploitation by the Fascist powers, themselves committed to the most extreme theories of economic self-sufficiency, could hardly supply convincing evidence that its contribution to the increasing international tension was more than marginal. Foreign acquiescence in Empire, as the French example earlier suggested, depended a great deal more on the realities of power than on economic policies as relatively insignificant as the proportion of world trade affected by British colonial preferences. That is not, of course, to deny that the economic policies of the 'thirties had *any* effect in contributing to international discord, but merely to attempt to see that effect in perspective.

More relevant to the preoccupations of trusteeship is the attempt to assess the consequences of the change in British commercial policy on the colonies themselves. The tariffs and still more the textile quotas imposed in the 'thirties aroused protests, not only in Britain, but in some colonies. Although in Ceylon the State Council, elected, let us remember, by universal adult suffrage, reluctantly accepted Imperial Preference on a temporary basis made permanent only in 1938, it altogether declined to impose quota restrictions against Japanese imports and this was done by British Order in Council. In the Straits Settlements the quotas were imposed by the official majority against the unanimous opposition of the unofficials. The policy was designed to restrict cheap imports and reduce consumption. How could this possibly be justified in countries where poverty was, even at best, the lot of almost all the inhabi-

tants? But if the case for free imports might seem straightforward, was it still true that colonial producers would get the best price for their exports when able to sell them freely at world prices settled by free competition? In a world like the world after 1929 this seemed a distinctly uncertain blessing. The Dominions, who were, after all, free to decide for themselves where their own interest lay, thought otherwise. 'What they wanted', Sir Keith Hancock wrote more than twenty years ago, 'was a shelter in British markets for their exports of food and raw materials. They were prepared to pay for this boon by giving increased shelter in their own markets to British exports of manufactured goods.'¹⁷ From the economic point of view, this bargain was, in the judgement of that great scholar, 'not precisely a mountain peak of human wisdom; but from the moral point of view it could hardly be described as an abyss of human depravity'. There was, of course, a great difference between 'the voluntary give and take of self-governing nations and the unilateral decisions' by which the trustee judged 'not only its own interests, but those of its dependencies'. Britain was ready to give the dependencies the same privileges as the Dominions demanded. Was it wholly unreasonable to demand from them, what the Dominions freely offered, some reciprocity? The story of Imperial Preference cannot, Hancock concluded, 'be told simply as a dirge for free trade and a lament for departed virtue'. There was a sharing of favours and a sharing of burdens. But here was, in fact, a striking illustration of the inadequacy of that aggregate 'the interests of the colonies' or even, 'the interests of the colony', as a tool—even of the most primitive kind—in the analysis of policy.

Another scholar, Dr. F. V. Meyer, carried out just after the second world war that detailed examination¹⁸ of Imperial Preference in the Colonial Empire which Hancock had suggested would certainly show that in the colonies, no less than in the Dominions, interests were diverse and conflicting. He

concluded that the United Kingdom's contribution to certain colonies had been substantial. The preferences it granted on sugar, molasses, pineapples, bananas and citrus fruit, wines and tobacco were costly and of notable benefit to the producing colonies concerned, in particular the West Indies, Fiji, Mauritius, Cyprus, and Nyasaland. In return the United Kingdom had received preference in practically all the non-African colonies and also in the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, and North-Western Rhodesia, and had also tried to benefit itself by imposing textile quotas in those colonies and in Nigeria and the Gold Coast. There was no doubt that these measures had resulted in increased proportions of colonial purchases from the Empire, but how much of that had been a net benefit to the United Kingdom was more problematical, in view of the possibility, which in textiles seemed almost certainty, that she had in consequence suffered from intensified foreign competition in non-colonial markets. In addition the textile preferences and quotas and the preference on boots and shoes had stimulated competition by low-cost Empire producers, notably India and Hong Kong. The United Kingdom, Dr Meyer pronounced, had on balance lost more from preferences accorded to the colonies than it gained from preferences in their markets. On the other hand the East African colonies which offered no preferences had gained to a minor extent from coffee and hard fibres preferences and Nyasaland to a substantial extent from that on tobacco. The West African colonies, especially Gambia and Sierra Leone, had on balance lost since their major products could not benefit from preferential treatment because Empire production exceeded Empire consumption. Ceylon and Malaya had also, on balance, lost while Malta lost without compensation. It was the sugar and banana colonies (the West Indies, Mauritius, and Fiji) and Cyprus and Nyasaland which (together with India) gained from the system.

Moreover, where preference was effective, it tended to encourage concentration on the preferred crop and so limit diversification. If assistance was, as in the West Indian example, undeniably essential, it would be better given in a form which might at least be designed to reduce rather than augment such uneconomic diversions. The most important conclusion was, of course, that, as with the Dominions, some colonies (and, within them, some producers) stood to gain by Imperial Preference while others stood to lose. The attempt to impose uniformity could therefore so far as it was successful only be unfair to some colonies. It was, on the contrary, the merit of a selective system of Imperial Preference as compared with the inclusion of widely diverse territories in a single protective system, that it made such individual treatment possible. There was more to be said for the apparently haphazard diversity of the 'twenties than for the too rigid attempt at uniformity in the 'thirties.

Next, we must look at another of the great debates of the inter-war years. Was development by European enterprise complementary to development by native enterprise? Was the latter to be preferred wherever possible and could the free play of market forces be relied upon to ensure that native producers received the prices to which they were entitled? Would those forces, again, ensure that where European enterprise was established the people of the territory received a fair share of the wealth produced in their country?

Any European settlement or plantation requires land, and at least in the earliest stages of European intervention, there was as a rule no market in land and no means of deciding a fair price, nor was it easy then or at much later stages to be sure that if other land was given in compensation it would be of equal quality. Knowledge of native society or of how much land its economy required developed very slowly. Until they had acquired, by contact with Europeans, new wants there

was no obvious reason why natives should wish to work for Europeans, unless they had no land for their traditional subsistence agriculture or were obliged to do so by compulsion, taxation, or administrative 'encouragement'. All these issues were very much in debate throughout the early twenties in Kenya, but it is worth noticing that it was Churchill's firm insistence in 1921¹⁹ that even the colonial government must obtain the Secretary of State's authority before employing forced labour that made it clear that settlers could not hope to do so, and that the administration could do no more for them than point out where labour was needed or where it was available and were to take no part in recruiting for private employment. Such neutrality might be easier on paper than in practice but settler resentment of it kept the issue alive, though most of the later controversy turned in fact on the use of forced labour by the government in extending the railway. As Ormsby-Gore pointed out in Parliament there was no railway in *West Africa* which had been built *without* forced labour.

But if we put all this on one side, as something in the nature of initial frictions, was it true that once they had been overcome, European settlement or plantation enterprise could be complementary to native enterprise? Native agriculture was subsistence agriculture; to develop new crops for export needed the close attention of the administration and especially the agricultural department. The aim of the Dual Policy officially adopted in Kenya was 'an increase in the quality and quantity of production on the native lands *pari passu* with the development of European cultivation'. Yet when in 1931 a Conservative ex-Minister, Lord Moyne, reported on the colony's finance he found that although the native bore 'a relatively greater burden' of taxation²⁰ the greater part of government expenditure, especially on agricultural services and research and education, was directed to the needs of non-natives. Special arrangements were, he said, urgently needed to guarantee that the

more backward community should get 'a fair share from central funds during the present period of unequal racial needs and political representation'.²¹ It took another seven years before the settlers would accept the income tax he also recommended to increase the revenue and distribute its incidence more fairly.

Where European enterprise took the form of plantations or mines, difficulty in securing adequate labour supplies, either because of the unwillingness of the existing population to engage in the work required or the lack of sufficiently large numbers in the area of the enterprise, had often led, before the first war, to the importation of labour, either by some special system of recruitment or under indenture. The labour in such cases was usually Indian as in Fiji, Ceylon, British Guiana or Mauritius, or, especially in Malaya, Chinese. The hostility of Indian opinion to the indenture system, which it considered nationally degrading, led to its suspension after the first war. But the social and political complexities which resulted cannot be ignored in considering the claims of immigrant enterprise to be complementary to native enterprise, especially as a considerable proportion invariably remained in the territory and eventually became a permanent element in the population. In such circumstances, the effects were in some cases similar to those so much feared by critics of the administration in Kenya. The native population, largely excluded from the developing modern sectors of the economy, tended to remain engaged mainly in traditional activities such as subsistence agriculture, or fishing, and economically relatively underdeveloped and weak even if, as in Fiji or Malaya, they retained their traditional social organization and a measure of political privilege, sheltered by the British administration. Apart from sisal in Tanganyika, plantations were not of very great importance in British tropical Africa, but mining, especially in Northern Rhodesia and in the West African territories, inevitably recruited its labour force from a wide area. In addition, the employment

opportunities available in Southern Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa attracted large numbers of Africans from British territories further north, especially Nyasaland.

The regulation of labour recruitment was an important pre-occupation of colonial governments in the inter-war years and much was done to assist the migrant by the regulation of contracts, the limitation of the period of engagement, medical examination, the provision of transport, the development of recognized routes with rest camps, and arrangements for deferred pay and repatriation. The social effects of migrant labour in traditional society were more disruptive than was generally supposed. The theory that if migrants were absent only for limited periods these effects would be relatively unimportant proved erroneous. Rules of social life in the villages were greatly weakened and agricultural productivity seriously lowered. It was an interesting commentary on the effect of the continuous criticism of labour recruitment by European enterprise in East and Central Africa that virtually nothing was said about the hardships of the migrant or seasonal labour which sought work in the African cocoa farms of the Gold Coast, or on the African cotton plantations of Buganda, or even in the gold mines of the Gold Coast, or the iron ore mines of Sierra Leone, European enterprises though these were. The Colonial Office Labour Adviser reported in 1941 that, although in West Africa the position was 'theoretically admirable, with a flow of entirely free labour, unrecruited and untrammelled by any sort of contract', in practice the worker was '... in a far worse position than his brother in a country where adequate arrangements exist for the collection, transport, care, and subsequent repatriation of the worker'.²²

Migrant, or more generally seasonal, labour was thus to be found wherever economic growth produced the stimulus of a sufficient demand. Intervention in the interests of that labour might be just as necessary, though evidently far more difficult,

in areas of native as of immigrant enterprise. But, whatever the appropriate remedies might be, this example illustrated the comparative neglect of the possible complexities of positive trusteeship in countries like Uganda and British West Africa where its vocal watchdogs in Britain seem to have felt a once-for-all decision in favour of native interests had been taken. It might also suggest that in a larger perspective some at least of the problems associated with European settlement or enterprise were problems inseparable from economic development of any kind which were merely thrown into prominence by the visibility of racial differences between employer and employed.

If production was in native hands, could it safely be assumed that unrestricted access to the world market would ensure that producers received the full competitive price? This issue was dramatically posed in 1937 when the Gold Coast cocoa farmers successfully refused to sell their cocoa and imposed a boycott of European imports. The immediate cause of their producers' strike was, a Commission of Enquiry reported,²³ an agreement on the part of twelve of the thirteen European firms who together bought 98 per cent of the cocoa to share the market among themselves on the basis of past performance and to eliminate competition by a price based on the world price and fixed margins for freight and other costs. There was really nothing new in this, except the impressive unanimity of African reaction. The tendency to concentration among European firms had been a very well-marked feature of the West African economy for several decades; similar pooling agreements had been made on various occasions in the previous twenty years, nor had they been confined to cocoa; others had at various times been concluded for other crops. Even if, as the firms argued, they had in the previous seven years paid out for cocoa sums substantially larger than the sums due at world prices, it was not evident that the remedy they proposed was the right one; moreover, it might be that since an even smaller number

of the same firms controlled by far the greater part of the import trade the losses they claimed to have made on their purchases of cocoa had in fact been recouped by profits on their sales of imports larger than would have been possible in a more competitive, let alone a perfectly competitive, economy. It is unnecessary to consider whether the conclusions reached by the Commission on the basis of its analysis of the cocoa trade were sound, or whether the measures actually adopted some years later by the British government in establishing publicly controlled buying monopolies for the major products were those best calculated to safeguard the interests of the producers. Both the analysis and the measures adopted have been severely criticized.²⁴ What is common ground is that, in West African conditions, competition in certain sectors of the economy was imperfect. Whether the remedy should be sought in public control of this major sector of the economy or in public action designed to promote a closer approximation to perfect competition has been the subject of as heated controversy in this context as in most others. What this example illustrated is that trusteeship, here as elsewhere, required, at the least, constant vigilance and greatly more economic competence than colonial governments or the Colonial Office possessed before the second world war.

And if it was not true that 'production by natives under European guidance' was in itself a sufficient condition of economic development free from serious exploitation, what was to be said of that other panacea, large-scale capital investment by European enterprise? There were many kinds of development which could only be achieved on this basis, whether it was straightforward private enterprise or as in the famous Gezira irrigation project in the Sudan one in which government, private enterprise, and native tenant farmers were combined in a single scheme in which the profits were shared on a basis prescribed in advance. In the Gezira project,²⁵ perhaps

the most constructive development undertaken in any colonial country, the share of private enterprise which provided management and some capital over the twenty-five years between 1925 and 1950 totalled £16 million, that of the tenants in the same period totalled £40 million, and the average profit received by each tenancy in 1946 was £49. By 1950, admittedly a boom year, it was £281. In 1946 an economist made a pioneer investigation of the national income of Northern Rhodesia,²⁶ and calculated that the output of the highly successful mining industry of that country had a gross value of £14½ million. Only £6.5 million of this was however spent in Northern Rhodesia and of that the share of African employees was less than a fifth. Her calculations showed that £10.4 million of Nyasaland's territorial income of £13.8 million in 1948 was earned by Africans. In Northern Rhodesia, with an African population four-fifths that of Nyasaland, the total territorial income was £39 million but only £11.5 million was earned by Africans.²⁷ There were great problems about calculations of this kind, notably in the valuation of subsistence production; but it none the less seemed safe to assume that the benefits of the copper industry had not, at that stage, been shared to any significant extent by the African population as a whole.

But the most perplexing problem of colonial policy in the inter-war years was one in which not even the rough and ready calculus of economic aggregates, had it then been available, would have served to test the aims of policy. It was, paradoxically, the one in which the experts, both academic and official, tended to be most certain of the fundamental rightness of the dominant ideas. Yet it was also one in which no policy could rest, in the last analysis, on more than judgements of value made by the policy makers themselves. Was the task of trusteeship, so far as those narrow limits of history, power, and economic pressure might allow, one of transforming colonial

society into a modern western civilization, however long that might take? Or was it to preserve, so far as might be, the traditional order of native society, purged of its grosser abuses, in Western eyes (cannibalism, for example) so that it might be enabled to survive until the native peoples were 'able to stand by themselves'? 'Indirect Rule'—it is time to give this school of thought the name by which, rather misleadingly, it was generally known—did not argue that the traditional institutions of native society should be preserved unchanged (as Hobson had gone far to imply) or that they could be left entirely free to make their own adaptation to the new demands which were bound to follow the imposition of colonial rule. The task was to assist them to make that adaptation. Changes so great that such an adaptation evidently could not be made must therefore not be introduced. Economic development and education should accordingly be promoted only so far as seemed likely to prove consistent with that over-riding purpose. It was for instance because the native social institutions whose disintegration they wished to prevent had developed in intimate relationship with an agricultural environment that advocates of indirect rule from Lugard onwards so strongly urged that native peasant production should be the basis of economic development. 'Indirect rule' called for a gradual blending of modern Western and traditional native elements without attempting to prescribe in advance what character the mixture should ultimately attain. It is difficult today to do justice to these ideas, when we can see so much more easily the inconsistencies, indeed the impossibility, of such a controlled social change in a world in which neither the speed nor the social consequences of economic growth—even by native peasant producers—could be foreseen once seriously begun.

Indirect rule had three major weaknesses. It demanded of the European agents of control an alert empiricism informed not only by conviction of the value to any people of its own

social values and institutions but also by a detailed knowledge of those institutions and of the precise impact on them of the varied social and economic results of Western rule. Such knowledge, even in most favourable circumstances, they could never attain. Secondly, native social institutions, especially in Africa, varied greatly in the extent to which they could effectively be utilized even for the simplest purposes of administration, let alone as the chosen instruments of that social reintegration which the inroads of modernity were making desperately urgent in some areas while others even in the same territory seemed to have remained largely untouched by their impact. Changes which could readily be absorbed, for example by the great Moslem emirates of Northern Nigeria with their well-developed systems of local administration and taxation, could not possibly be accommodated by communities of a few thousand people with no central authority more elaborate than a gathering of family heads. Thirdly, even the largest and most highly organized native states were an uncertain basis on which to construct any institutions which looked like being able to support the management of the central services of the territories of which they now formed only a relatively small part. It was these two factors, the immense range of native societies which colonial rule brought within a single administrative unit and the territorial unevenness of the social change it induced, that proved incompatible with the ideas of indirect rule.

Local administration apart, it was in educational policy that those ideas had their greatest influence, assisted by a widespread anxiety to avoid reproducing what were considered the dangerous results of educational policy in India. Insistence on the use of native languages in the earlier years of schooling, attempts to give education a more practical bent, and a desire to see more attention given at the secondary stage to vocational rather than literary or general education all reflected this

approach. But, especially in Africa, other influences, of which shortage of money was not the least important, resulted in a policy of close co-operation in education with the missions, which provided almost all primary, as well as many secondary, schools and teacher training besides. Although their leading authorities accepted a good deal of this general approach to educational policy, there was a great variety in its actual application. Without the missions, practice might well have been more influenced by hostility to 'literary' education and by some of the more doctrinaire enthusiasts for its adaptation, not to the developing needs of Africa, but to features of traditional society destined to diminishing importance. But in their fundamental approach, the educational policy makers were surely thinking on the right lines, even if that approach was distorted by some of the more conservative administrators and also by Africans determined not to be fobbed off with what they deemed a second best in education. The new independent states of Africa and Asia, which are certainly not going to be replicas of any Western country, are rediscovering the vital importance of reshaping education to meet the actual needs of native society.

To turn, finally, to the political implications of trusteeship. In my first lecture, I claimed that British policy, as well as the demands made on it by colonial spokesmen, had indeed been influenced by the existence of the Dominions. I believe this to have been of crucial importance in determining the British habit of mind as compared with that of other colonial powers. But too much can easily be claimed for it and, especially by apologists for British colonial policy after the second world war, it generally has been. British policy never, in the inter-war years or earlier, contemplated the eventual incorporation of the colonial territories in a Greater Britain. There was a general impression, it can hardly be called more than that, that local participation in colonial government was desirable and could be pro-

gressively increased as capacity for such participation developed, which often meant as the pressure for it became too great to be conveniently resisted. If British policy was certainly not opposed in principle to any idea of eventual self-government it equally certainly did not during the inter-war years conceive it to be part of its duty 'officially to strive' to bring self-government into existence. A substantial proportion of that relatively small group who were closely and actively concerned with colonial policy was wholly sceptical of any idea that, in the Colonial Empire, self-government was likely to be achieved by the development of parliamentary, still less democratic, institutions. To the people who had, after all, invented parliamentary government, the extent of political consensus that it requires for its continued existence was quite well understood. But with that understanding went a profound conviction that political development was not to be brought about by social engineering, by elaborate constitutional provisions supported by social planning. Rather, it must be an organic growth, fostered by habits of accommodation, which were taken to be the supreme art in politics. There resulted an assumption that piecemeal concessions of varying degrees of participation in government might be expected somehow to result in the development of political habits which could in the long run be translated into an institutional basis for self-government appropriate to the varying genius of the inhabitants of a given territory.

For all the scepticism of the professionals, British opinion, especially liberal opinion, continually underestimated the strength of feeling that representative institutions, however remote they might be from achieving responsible government, invariably aroused in communally divided countries. For all their experience in Ireland and India, they remained hopeful that experience would teach the habit of accommodation. Here too, history had imposed a limitation which the British

never quite brought themselves to think of trying to remove. In virtually every territory a Legislative Council has been established at a time when the unofficials to be appointed to it were mostly members of the local British business and professional community. It might still have an official majority—almost all of them had during the inter-war years—but it had the functions and many of the ceremonial procedures of a parliament, and it was inevitable that, as a native educated and professional class emerged, its members too should seek representation in that legislature and look to its eventual development as a genuine local parliament. Convinced of the entire incompatibility of such a development with their ideals, the 'indirect rule' administrators concentrated on limiting the territorial scope of the Councils wherever possible and so missed the opportunity of reconciling the native authority system with the need for territorial political unity which might have been provided by arranging for Legislative Councils made up of representatives of the Native authorities. Far sighted in this as in most other things, Guggisberg arranged such a link in the Gold Coast Colony in 1925 but the only other territory in which anything similar was done was Fiji where it long survived as the basis of Fijian representation.

So long as Legislative Councils existed they were bound to suggest development by well-recognized stages—elected minority, unofficial majority, elected majority, responsible government. The combined effect of this fact and the habit of mind I have tried to describe was the gradual development in the inter-war years of the theory that while British overall responsibility would continue for an indefinite period, colonial governments would pass through progressive stages to eventual self-government. And although this did not necessarily imply parliamentary government, no alternative was suggested. As early as 1919 Amery had cautiously stated the progressive theory while regretting that the process must necessarily take a

great deal longer than some members would like.²⁸ In 1938, Malcolm MacDonald enunciated it again to the House of Commons in a peroration²⁹ which emphasizes both the notion of organic growth and its exceedingly long-term character.

‘The great purpose of the British Empire is the gradual spread of freedom among all His Majesty’s subjects in whatever part of the world they live. That spread of freedom is a slow, evolutionary process. In some countries it is more rapid than in others. In some parts of the Empire, in the Dominions, that evolutionary process has been completed, it is finished. Inside the Colonial Empire the evolutionary process is going on all the time. In some colonies like Ceylon the gaining of freedom has already gone very far. In others it is necessarily a much slower process. It may take generations, or even centuries, for the peoples in some parts of the Colonial Empire to achieve self-government. But it is a major part of our policy, even among the most backward peoples of Africa, to teach them and to encourage them always to be able to stand a little more on their own feet.’

Mr MacDonald did not mention that in some colonies that evolutionary process had in fact, and quite recently, gone backwards. Malta which from 1919 to 1936 had had full internal self-government, and Cyprus, which had had an elected majority from 1925 to 1931, had both found themselves bundled unceremoniously from the front to the back of the procession. Was the whole progressive theory then simply a sham? Certainly, if with that theory in mind, and assuming the objective to have been democratic parliamentary government, one examines the history of most colonies which have now become independent, the answer must seem depressingly obvious. The truth, I suggest, is more complex. Among the remoter objects of policy was some form of self-government appropriate to the genius of the people, and the valid criticisms are that no alternative to a parliamentary form was ever clearly

envisaged while the notion of organic growth facilitated many developments which were not only unlikely to promote a parliamentary form of government but even to bring into existence the national base needed for any kind of self-government.

The British habit of setting up each territory as a separate unit of administration and government, with its own budget, laws and public services, has unquestionably been a powerful factor in fostering colonial nationalism and also, where the unit was a suitable one to serve as the basis of a state, self-government of some kind. But another aspect of this habitual approach was a tendency to accept whatever units the British found themselves confronted with and to maintain them—even within a larger territory which for other purposes they administered as a single entity—without considering what effect maintaining such smaller units must necessarily have on the possible emergence of any unit suitable to provide the basis for a state of any kind. It was, for instance, initially convenient in Malaya nominally to govern through the Sultans and in consequence nine separate Malay States were retained in this small area.³⁰ The indirect rule system in Africa provides many similar examples in Uganda, Nigeria, and Ghana. Moreover, this tendency applied not only to territorial units, but to racial communities or minorities, which were themselves often treated as separate units for many purposes of government, as, for example, the Chinese Protectorate in the Straits Settlements whereby a special set of officials administered the Chinese through their own community leaders, or the Fijian administration in Fiji under which the affairs of Fijians were in almost all important matters in the hands of a separate organization of government, which resembled a state within a state. Arrangements of this kind may be the basis, for the community concerned, of some degree of self-government within a colonial system but they are not likely to promote any national self-government within the territory as a whole or the gradual development of a habit of

accommodation between different communities which the idea of organic political growth demands. In saying this, I am not suggesting either that regional or communal loyalties in such territories are fictitious or that it is at all easy for a colonial ruler to reduce their force, but only that arrangements of this kind can hardly be regarded as exemplifying stages in any development towards self-government on a national basis in each territory, such as the progressive theory implied.

The problems of trusteeship were the problems of power, of the responsibilities of the strong towards the weak. The unequal distribution of political and economic power in the world, which was the fundamental basis of colonialism, has not been suddenly abolished by the accession of most colonies to political independence. The idea of trusteeship could not, any more than any other general principle, supply a clear and definite prescription of the proper role of a colonial power in the enormous variety of actual situations which confronted British rulers in the Colonial Empire. But whenever a serious and sustained attempt was made to bring it to bear on the actual circumstances of a particular territory it brought into much sharper relief specific problems inherent in such a relationship. With the end of the colonial era, it is for the rulers of the new independent states to judge what their responsibilities for the welfare of their own people require. But the rich and powerful countries of the world are not thereby absolved from any further responsibility towards those countries. Now, as earlier, their interest as well as their duty should impel them to seek to reduce the international tensions that result from these great disparities in wealth and power. In that stupendous task, the search for reciprocities of interest, which was at the heart of the trusteeship idea, remains more likely to provide a viable basis for the relationship between a rich and strong and a poor and weak country than the unmitigated national altruism, or national egotism which are too often proffered to us today as the only

moral or rational bases of policy. Greatly changed though their terms have been by the disappearance of western European colonial rule, the dilemmas of trusteeship remain, as the young Churchill wrote of East Africa more than half a century ago, 'the problems of the world'.³¹

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹ Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 408-9.

² J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism* (London, 1902). All quotations in the text are from the third edition (1938), pp. 225, 228-9, 232.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴ Lugard, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

⁵ Hobson, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-6.

⁶ Sir W. K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs. II: Problems of Economic Policy 1918-1939, Part II* (London, 1942), pp. 141-2. The report so summarized is *Financial and Economic Position of Basutoland* (Cmd. 4907), 1935.

⁷ Cmd. 4907, p. 34.

⁸ The contemporary debate is summarized in L. A. Mills, *British Rule in Eastern Asia* (London, 1942), pp. 50-73.

⁹ Cmd. 2884, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ *On Alien Rule and Self-Government* (London, 1960), pp. 38-55.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹² *Labour and the Nation*, p. 49.

¹³ The phrase is Dr Kedourie's. See his *Nationalism* (London, 1960), p. 18.

¹⁴ *The Empire in Africa: Labour's Policy* (1926), p. 7. Cited in R. Hinden, *Empire and After* (London, 1949), p. 119.

¹⁵ *Joint Committee on Closer Union in East Africa. Vol. I: Report* (H. of C. 156), 1931, pp. 29-31.

¹⁶ Commons *Hansard*, 7 December 1938, c. 1246.

¹⁷ Hancock, *op. cit.*, pp. 309-12.

¹⁸ F. V. Meyer, *Britain's Colonies in World Trade* (London, 1948), pp. 120-8.

¹⁹ *Despatch to the Governor of the East African Protectorate relating to Native Labour* (Cmd. 1509), 1921.

²⁰ *Report by . . . (Lord Moyne) on Certain Questions in Kenya* (Cmd. 4093), 1932.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²² *Labour Conditions in West Africa* (Cmd. 6277), 1941, p. 11.

²³ *Report of the Commission on the Marketing of West African Cocoa* (Cmd. 5845), 1938.

²⁴ P. T. Bauer, *West African Trade* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 204-14 and 263-343.

²⁵ A. Gaitskell, *Gezira* (London, 1959), pp. 267-74.

²⁶ P. Deane, *Colonial Social Accounting* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 37.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

²⁸ Commons *Hansard*, 30 July 1919, c. 2176.

²⁹ Commons *Hansard*, 7 December 1938, c. 1248.

³⁰ I owe this illustration to T. H. Silcock, *The Commonwealth Economy of Southeast Asia* (Durham, North Carolina, 1959), p. 79.

³¹ Sir W. S. Churchill, *My African Journey* (London, 1908, reprinted 1962), p. 44.

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